

Labor's Plan for Defence



New Leadership.

Labor's Plan for Defence

Election 2007

Policy Document

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Labor's Plan for Defence

Overview

Labor's first priority is the defence and security of our nation, its people and their interests.

Defence policy is a core component of Australia's national security strategy.

In an increasingly interdependent world, defence and national security cannot be achieved without effective international relationships – bilateral, regional and multilateral.

Labor's approach to Australian defence is built around three fundamental pillars:

- Australia's alliance with the United States.
- Australia's active membership of the United Nations.
- Comprehensive regional engagement.

Australia's alliance with the US is fundamental to our national security and our long term strategic interests.

US engagement in our region plays a critical stabilising role.

Joint exercises, intelligence sharing and Australian access to US equipment and technologies adds enormously to the power and reach of the Australian Defence Force.

Australia benefits from a stable, rules based multilateral system with the United Nations at its centre.

Whilst recognising the limitations of the UN, Labor also recognises the critical contributions it can make to stabilisation operations.

Australian contributions to UN mandated initiatives are important to international efforts to secure peace, stability and humanitarian goals.

Repeated deployments to Bougainville, Timor Leste, and the Solomon Islands highlight the uncertainty and instability that exist in our own neighbourhood.

It is in our region where Australia's strategic interests are concentrated, our responsibilities exacting and our vulnerabilities greatest.

Labor believes that fostering peace, stability and security in our neighbourhood and the broader Asia Pacific region is critical to Australia's national security.

Regional engagement is an enduring defence priority and an important component of Australia's international responsibilities.

It is in Australia's interests to comprehensively engage with our neighbours to better meet our shared security challenges, which include the threat of terrorism.

Labor's Plan for Defence

A new strategic direction

A Rudd Labor Government will commission a new Defence White Paper.

Much has happened in the world since the last Defence White Paper was released in 2000, and it is time for a full and detailed reassessment of Australia's strategic circumstances.

Events such as the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, the Bali bombings and Australian Defence Force (ADF) deployments to Iraq, Afghanistan, Timor Leste and the Solomon Islands highlight the urgency of developing a more cohesive and up-to-date strategy for our defence and national security.

The Howard Government has failed the Australian people by not undertaking rigorous long term planning through the discipline of a new Defence White Paper, and instead relying on the 2000 White Paper which now requires reassessment.

Labor's new Defence White Paper will ensure that Australia's defence capability requirements are achievable and shaped by our long term strategic priorities, rather than the short term political objectives practiced by the Howard Government.

The new Defence White Paper will provide a more rigorous assessment of the connections between strategic objectives, force planning and capability priorities.

The new Defence White Paper will support the five ADF strategic tasks which have guided operational planning to date, namely:

- Ensuring Australian defence self reliance.
- Controlling the air and sea approaches to our continent.
- Contributing to the security and stability of our immediate neighbourhood.
- Contributing to coalitions of forces to protect our wider national interests beyond our immediate neighbourhood.
- Undertaking occasional tasks in support of peacetime national priorities.

These strategic tasks are enduring.

They shape Australia's national security priorities now and into the future.

They provide the inherent discipline that brings balance to the ADF's structural and operational development.

A Rudd Labor Government will maintain and enhance Australia's capacity for independent military operations in our own region, with strong military capabilities able to dominate our air and sea approaches and to move joint forces quickly, with superior firepower, to carry out their missions.

The new Defence White Paper will address the requirements for the ADF to:

- Deploy more units at higher readiness levels.
- Deploy at shorter notice.
- Sustain operations for longer periods.

Labor will commission
a new Defence White
Paper

Labor's new Defence
White Paper will
ensure that our
strategic priorities
drive our defence
planning

A Rudd Labor Government will ensure that a well balanced, adaptable and flexible force structure is further developed and maintained.

A balanced ADF provides flexibility and versatility, offering a wider range of capabilities to respond to a broad range of contingencies.

A balanced force structure contributes to the objective of deploying superior strategic weight irrespective of the task.

The new Defence White Paper will address the preparedness of ADF units to respond to new strategic circumstances.

Labor will maintain a well balanced, adaptable and flexible ADF

Defence Capability Plan

A Rudd Labor Government will ensure its new Defence White Paper returns discipline and strategic coherence to the Defence Capability Plan (DCP).

The Howard Government has politicised and compromised the integrity of the DCP by consistently ignoring its strategic basis.

The Howard Government's failure to have in place the operational priorities, framework and discipline that an up-to-date Defence White Paper brings to long term capability development and planning has led to an unaffordable and incoherent DCP.

Labor will give the Defence Capability Plan strategic coherence

The ADF is also suffering because of the Howard Government's failure to effectively manage the DCP.

The Howard Government's mismanagement of equipment projects worth hundreds of millions of dollars has resulted in important capabilities being delayed or abandoned.

Efficiency in defence is not just a matter of fiscal prudence and good housekeeping – it is a matter of strategic necessity.

A significant example of DCP mismanagement is the Howard Government's election year decision to purchase 24 F/A-18F Super Hornet aircraft for \$6 billion without justifying the need or undertaking any comparative analysis or consideration of other aircraft.

This followed the Howard Government finally realising that Australia faced a serious air combat capability gap due to the early retirement of the F111 aircraft in 2010 and the likely delay in the arrival of the Joint Strike Fighter.

Labor will ensure that there is no air combat capability gap

Without superior air combat capabilities, the ADF's ability to control the air and sea approaches to our nation and implement a maritime strategy is compromised.

Even if the Super Hornet is the right aircraft for Australia, the decision to make this \$6 billion purchase should have been made some five years ago before further significant investment was made in new capabilities for the F111 fleet.

This is merely one example of the lack of high level strategic guidance for the acquisition of major equipment under the Howard Government.

New submarine capability

There is widespread agreement that submarines provide a vital military capability for Australia.

The development of any new submarines that Australia might acquire requires long term planning and needs to start now.

A Rudd Labor Government is committed to ensuring that preliminary work on Australia's next generation of submarines is carried out ahead of the current timetable which schedules first pass approval for 2011.

South Australia is the only credible location for the construction of Australia's next generation of submarine. This commitment is also necessary to give certainty to the long term maintenance and expansion of the defence industry and technology base in South Australia, capabilities necessary for Australia's long term national defence.

It is most unlikely that any 'off the shelf' options will fill Australia's future submarine requirements.

A developmental project involving the migration of evolved Collins Class combat and ship control systems might be necessary.

Ongoing access to leading edge US submarine technology will be crucial to the operational effectiveness of the next generation of submarines.

The negotiation of a new Australia-US cooperative agreement on submarine technology will be a high priority for a Rudd Labor Government.

Naval shipbuilding, maintenance and repair

A Rudd Labor Government will maintain a competitive Australian naval shipbuilding, maintenance and repair industry.

This sector is a strategic asset and a vital element of Labor's self reliant defence policy.

The sector adds to Australia's skills base and creates jobs around the country, particularly in Victoria and South Australia.

It was Labor that re-introduced a naval shipbuilding capability to Australia, and a Rudd Labor Government will continue to promote the strategic value of this industry.

Labor supports a viable, and eventually privatised, Australian Submarine Corporation (ASC). Given its unique role in constructing the new Air Warfare Destroyers and servicing and supporting the Collins Class submarine fleet, Labor believes that the ASC is a strategic national asset.

A Rudd Labor Government is committed to the acquisition of three Air Warfare Destroyers, with the strong option of acquiring a fourth vessel.

Australia's alliance with the United States

Australia's alliance with the US is one of the three pillars of Labor's national security policy.

The Australia-US alliance is fundamental to Australia's national security.

Labor regards the international role of the US, and US strategic engagement in the Asia Pacific region, as being vital to regional stability and will continue to encourage US engagement in the Asia Pacific.

Labor will start work on our next generation of submarines

Labor will maintain a competitive naval shipbuilding, maintenance and repair sector

The US alliance is fundamental to Australia's national security

The ANZUS Treaty has stood the test of time and proven its relevance to our contemporary security environment.

Labor endorsed the invocation of the ANZUS Treaty in support of the US after the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001.

Australia derives substantial benefits from intelligence sharing arrangements with the US.

The Joint Facility at Pine Gap makes a major contribution to the deterrence and avoidance of international conflict.

This contribution is consistent with Labor's national security, disarmament and non-proliferation objectives.

A Rudd Labor Government will enhance cooperation and joint training between the ADF and US military forces.

Many advantages accrue to the ADF through its close relationship with the US military.

Access to new equipment, exchange postings, individual training opportunities and participation in high intensity combined military exercises are all excellent opportunities and entry points to sustain the close defence relationship, and add considerably to ADF capability.

Relationships and alliances in the region

Australia's security is inextricably linked to regional stability.

Labor is committed to bilateral and multilateral defence arrangements that make a real contribution to regional security.

A Rudd Labor Government will actively utilise existing arrangements and forums, like the Five Power Defence Arrangements, the Asia Pacific Defence Ministers' Forum and the ASEAN Regional Forum to promote effective regional responses to shared strategic challenges, including the threat of terrorism.

Labor will build on Australia's defence relationship with Indonesia, based on equality and partnership, to the benefit of both countries and the region, while ensuring that our commitment to liberal democratic values and human rights is not compromised.

A Rudd Labor Government will re-invigorate Australia's defence relationship with New Zealand, harmonise our responsibilities in the South Pacific, and improve the interoperability of our defence forces.

Labor will encourage regular military exercises with NZ and will encourage greater synergy between our two defence forces.

Consistent with Labor's strong support for the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands and Operation Astute in Timor Leste, a Rudd Labor Government will engage with the nations of the South Pacific to raise standards of governance, improve law enforcement and modernise security forces.

Labor will enhance cooperation and joint training between the ADF and the US military

Labor is committed to bilateral and multilateral defence arrangements that make a real contribution to regional security

Recent operations in Timor Leste have highlighted the benefits of training and preparation for military and deployable police personnel in dealing with the complexities of post conflict resolution.

Regional stabilisation operations, involving the re-establishment of law and order in fragile states, is placing new and increasing demands on both the ADF and the Australian Federal Police.

A Rudd Labor Government will implement a strategy of joint training and preparation aimed at appropriately preparing our ADF and police personnel for such operations, by enhancing cooperation between security agencies during training, to accurately reflect the operational realities.

Consistent with the UN's emphasis on civil-military cooperation in both humanitarian and complex emergency responses, a Rudd Labor Government will expand the ADF's civil-military cooperation (CIMIC) capability.

CIMIC involves interaction and cooperation with civil actors including the national population, local authorities and national, international and non-government organisations and agencies.

The need to improve the ADF's CIMIC capability was demonstrated by recent ADF deployments in the Solomon Islands and Timor Leste.

In both of these cases, CIMIC was identified as a critical component of effective regional engagement.

Labor will expand the ADF's civil-military cooperation capability

Iraq and Afghanistan

Australia's participation in the war in Iraq represents the single greatest failure of our national security policy since Vietnam.

Iraq has diverted Australia's defence resources away from the military action against Osama bin Laden, Al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan, and the prevention of terrorism in our neighbourhood.

A Rudd Labor Government will withdraw Australian combat forces from Iraq in consultation with our allies, the US and the UK, and the Iraqi Government.

The withdrawal will be based on Australian combat forces remaining in Iraq for the completion of the current rotation, and then providing one further six month rotation in consultation with the US and the Iraqis.

This would permit the necessary adjustments to be made on the ground.

A Rudd Labor Government will maintain the ADF deployment to Afghanistan in support of the Afghan Government and to assist in the destruction of Al Qaeda.

Labor will withdraw Australian combat troops from Iraq

Defence budget

With an annual budget of \$22 billion a year and an organisational population of around 85,000 people, Defence is one of our most extensive national undertakings.

The Howard Government has failed to plan for the ongoing personnel and operating costs generated by new equipment to such an extent that the predicted shortfall calls into question the sustainability of the Defence budget.

Labor will conduct a full audit of the Defence budget

A Rudd Labor Government will conduct a full audit of the Defence budget to determine the true position as a matter of priority.

Labor is committed to maintaining defence spending, including a minimum annual 3 per cent real growth until 2016, and is committed to ensuring that Defence dollars are spent more effectively and efficiently.

Defence management

The dramatic events of recent years serve to remind all Australians of the importance of having in place a strong, adequately manned and well resourced ADF, well served by an efficient Department of Defence.

Labor agrees with the recommendations of the recent Proust Review and will ensure that the Minister for Defence in a Rudd Labor Government, along with the Department of Defence, work diligently to implement them.

This implementation process will be closely monitored and its effectiveness reviewed regularly.

Given the magnitude of our investment in Defence, Labor believes that Australians are entitled to demand that robust and accountable processes exist in the Australian Defence organisation.

The Australian community strongly supports the ADF.

The ADF's outstanding service in Timor Leste, Afghanistan, Iraq, the Solomon Islands and many other deployments across the globe attest to the professionalism, discipline and dedication of our military personnel in action.

A Rudd Labor Government will maintain a strong, efficient and responsive ADF with the equipment, personnel and skills it needs to meet the demands placed upon it by the Australian Government.

Labor will implement a number of initiatives, and act upon their findings to address shortcomings in the Defence organisation. These will include:

- A comprehensive audit of Defence financial management to ensure that the corporate performance of the organisation fully complies with the Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997 and meets best practice standards.
- A formal evaluation of the effectiveness of the reforms to the Defence Materiel Organisation (DMO) that were implemented following the 2003 Review of Defence Procurement.
- Greater and more effective Parliamentary oversight of the major defence acquisition program.

Defence industry and procurement

Defence procurement

The Howard Government has wasted billions of taxpayers' dollars through its gross mismanagement of Defence procurement.

Despite 11 years of reviews and reform programs, five Ministers and unprecedented staff turnover within Defence, delays and budget blow outs are

Labor will maintain a strong and efficient ADF that has the equipment, people and skills it needs

still accepted by the Howard Government as the norm rather than the exception.

The final result of this constant cycle of delays and mismanagement is that the ADF is not getting the new equipment it needs to do its job.

The worst examples of the Government's procurement bungling include:

- The decision to buy eleven 40 year old Seasprite helicopters that were used in the Vietnam War at a cost of \$1 billion. The delivery of these aircraft is already over five years late and it will be 2011 before they might eventually be accepted into service.
- The \$1.4 billion upgrade of the Navy's six guided missile frigates was reduced to only four ships for the same price and is running five years late.
- A two year delay in the \$3.5 billion acquisition of crucial Airborne Early Warning and Control capability under Project Wedgetail.

Labor believes that an effective and efficient system for evaluating, acquiring and maintaining Defence equipment is central to the effectiveness of the ADF and ultimately to Australia's national security.

Fundamental change is needed to overcome the failures in Defence procurement that have become normal under the Howard Government.

The efficient and timely delivery of new equipment is more important than ever at a time of increased demands on Australia's Defence resources.

Labor will also task and resource the Australian National Audit Office to undertake independent evaluations of the top 30 major defence equipment projects on an annual basis.

Defence industry

Australian defence industry plays a vital role in supporting the ADF.

A competitive Australian defence industry is a vital element of Australia's defence capability and integral to Labor's policy of defence self-reliance.

Given the level of spending on Defence, a vibrant defence industry can create highly-skilled jobs, generate investment and make a major contribution to economic development and growth.

Under the Howard Government, Australian industry involvement in defence acquisitions has fallen considerably and is now at its lowest level in decades.

The Australian National Audit Office has reported that Defence is unable to monitor accurately the extent of Australian industry involvement in major and minor equipment projects.

A Rudd Labor Government will ensure that as much of the Defence budget as possible is spent in Australia.

Labor will emphasise preference for Australian content and require tenderers to develop detailed strategies for involving Australian industry to the greatest extent possible.

To ensure that Australians receive maximum benefits from their spending on Defence, a Rudd Labor Government will introduce new reporting obligations

The Howard Government has failed to manage Defence procurement

The efficient delivery of new equipment is more important than ever given the increased demands on the ADF

A competitive defence industry is a vital element of Australia's defence capability

on Defence to include in its Annual Report a specific section outlining Australian involvement in major equipment acquisition projects.

A Rudd Labor Government will also:

- Implement new systems to provide better access for Australia's small and medium enterprises to information on minor capability projects.
- Formalise assessment processes in the DMO for unsolicited capability proposals that are submitted by industry.
- Further expand and encourage the links between the Defence Science and Technology Organisation and the Australian defence industry to ensure better technology transfer to Australian industry.

Labor will ensure that as much of the Defence budget as possible is spent in Australia

Defence personnel

Looking after ADF personnel

There is no more valuable asset in the ADF than its people.

Ultimately, the security of our nation and its interests are in the hands of our skilled and loyal ADF personnel.

The recruitment and retention of skilled ADF personnel is a critical issue for the ADF.

The Howard Government's failure to stem the tide of skilled personnel leaving the ADF is a critical flaw in its national security policies.

The ADF places very high demands on its people and their families.

A Rudd Labor Government will reduce this burden and assist ADF personnel to manage the unique challenges they and their families face in serving the nation.

Labor will do more to ensure that the ADF becomes an employer of choice

Free medical and dental care for ADF families

ADF families can face significant difficulties obtaining access to general medical and dental care for dependants, especially in regional and remote localities.

Posting to a remote location can mean that ADF families struggle to access the sort of health care that Australians enjoy.

A Rudd Labor Government will progressively extend free health care currently provided to ADF personnel to ADF dependent spouses and children.

Labor will begin this with a \$33.1 million investment starting at 12 Defence Family Health Care Clinics, with a focus on remote bases locations and major regional centres.

Labor will extend free health care to ADF dependent spouses and children

Defence Reserves

The Defence Reserves make an indispensable contribution to our nation's defence.

Part time force elements and individuals contribute to ADF capability in their own right, and are an important source of recruitment and sustainment for both the permanent ADF and defence industry.

The 2000 Defence White Paper identified strategic roles for part time forces including “supporting and sustaining the types of contemporary military operations in which the ADF may be increasingly engaged”.

This may include contributing fully trained personnel within the ADF's permanent units as well as providing skills that are “either scarce or unavailable”.

Not only are the Defence Reserves an important part of our defence capability, they also play an invaluable operational role in the contemporary strategic environment.

Defence Reservists are currently involved in a number of deployments around the world. The Reserves also play a role in providing natural disaster relief and homeland security, such as that provided at the recent APEC conference.

The Defence Reserves are also involved in broader government programs such as the intervention in Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory.

Labor supports the principle of properly preparing Reservists for a role in sustaining the permanent ADF on operations.

Reserve infantry elements in a state of high readiness should properly be utilised to ensure force sustainment requirements for reinforcement and rotation are satisfied.

A Rudd Labor Government will, as a matter of priority, reinvigorate the critical role of the Reserves.

Labor supports increasing flexibility for both employers and employees to negotiate flexible workplace arrangements so employees are able to meet their Reservist commitments.

A Rudd Labor Government will work closely with the business community to achieve this.

Labor will also monitor the recent changes made to benefits and allowances for Reservists and will make any necessary changes to continue to foster a vibrant and skilled Reservist capability.

Defence housing

Housing is an important component of efforts to recruit and retain the best personnel for the ADF.

The Defence Housing Authority and the Defence Home Owner Scheme were both Labor Government initiatives, established in 1988 and 1991 respectively.

While these were worthy initiatives, Labor has expressed the view for some time that the Howard Government has been complacent on Defence housing, and that housing services for ADF personnel required significant updating and improvement.

A Rudd Labor Government will fully support the extension to the Defence Home Loan Assistance Scheme announced in the most recent budget.

Labor will reinvigorate the critical role of the Reserves as a matter of priority

Honours and awards

The honours and awards system is a difficult and often contentious area for politicians to engage with.

While there is a strong desire to reward military service, the need to preserve the integrity of our honours and awards system is also important.

The Howard Government has failed to address a high number of longstanding concerns in this area.

For ADF personnel who have served our country with distinction and have never been recognised appropriately this is simply not good enough.

A Rudd Labor Government will form a permanent independent tribunal to oversight Defence honours and awards, to take the politics out of medal policy.

The tribunal will consider the following outstanding honours and awards issues as a matter of priority:

- The claims of personnel stationed at RAAF Ubon for recognition with a medal.
- The criteria for the Australian Defence Medal.
- The claims of the Merchant Navy, including the US Army Small Ships Sections, for recognition.

A Rudd Labor Government will also task the tribunal to investigate other longstanding issues including recognition of:

- 4RAR personnel who served in Malaysia in 1966 to 67.
- Military Service in Papua New Guinea after 1975.
- Service during Operation Solace in Somalia in 1992.
- The counter terrorist duties of Special Air Service personnel.
- Service as part of peacekeeping operations since 1975.
- Personnel who took part in the evacuation of the Australian Embassy in Saigon in 1975.
- Entertainers in the Vietnam Conflict who went with US concert parties.
- Far East Prisoners of War who were killed while escaping.
- Cadet instructors.

Other outstanding honours and awards issues will be considered by the tribunal in due course.

A Rudd Labor Government will also fully implement the recommendations of the Post Armistice Korean Service Review.

This Review was established to examine the level of recognition that should be given for service in Korea from 1953 to 1956.

The Review made six recommendations, but the Howard Government chose to ignore four of them.

A Rudd Labor Government will continue the review of recognition for service in the Battle of Long Tan.

Labor will establish an independent tribunal to make decisions about honours and awards

Labor has a longstanding commitment to conduct an independent review of the gallantry awards and citations made at Long Tan.

Labor also remains committed to supporting the award of the GRVN Cross of Gallantry Unit Citation with Palm to D Company 6RAR.

Reforms to military justice

In 2003, Labor initiated a Senate Inquiry to hear evidence from ADF personnel and their families about the military justice system.

The current process of military justice reform is largely a result of the inquiry's report, which was tabled in June 2005.

A Rudd Labor Government will ensure that the military justice system competently balances dual objectives:

- First, it must ensure that the ADF's operational needs for effective and efficient discipline are met.
- Second, it must uphold objective and independent standards of justice that the public has confidence in, protecting the rights of ADF personnel and ensuring fair treatment.

The second progress report on the military justice reforms, tabled on 29 March 2007, noted some progress with changing the ADF discipline system.

This included the establishment of the Australian Military Court and improvements to the redress of grievance process.

But some continuing problems were brought to light by recent reports into the ADF's investigative capability and the learning culture in training establishments, and by inquiries into the sudden deaths of Private Jacob Kovco and Trooper Angus Lawrence.

The committee's third progress report, tabled in September 2007, found that some longstanding problems continue which will require additional time to address, but commended some progress being made on complaint management systems.

A Rudd Labor Government will continue the process of military justice reform.

Military superannuation

Military superannuation is also a vital component of our ability to attract and retain talented ADF personnel.

A Rudd Labor Government will maintain a generous military superannuation system, in recognition of the importance of the ADF and the immense responsibility placed on personnel in securing and defending Australia.

Labor called on the Howard Government to remove the new tax imposed by the new Better Super reforms on Defence superannuants' part commutation lump sums.

This tax increase was unnecessary and unfair, and would disadvantage retiring Defence personnel.

When the Government only agreed to protect DFRDB members, Labor

Labor will continue the reform of the military justice system

Labor will maintain a generous military superannuation scheme

committed to removing this new tax for MSBS, which has more than 46,400 contributing members.

Recently, the Howard Government finally agreed to adopt Labor's policy, and introduced regulations to extend this protection to MSBS members.

Release and consult on the military superannuation review report

There have been a number of outstanding issues regarding military superannuation that have been raised by individuals and organisations with an interest in this area.

An independent Military Superannuation Review was established earlier this year. After taking submissions, holding hearings and gathering evidence and information, the report was provided to the Government in July. Since that time, the Government has refused to release the report or to comment publicly about its recommendations.

The Military Superannuation Review is the latest example of the Howard Government refusing to release vital information about the operation, costs and alternative policy approaches that should be considered in this area.

The inability to access this report and the other data held by Government has meant the important public debate about what should be the long term approach to military superannuation has been hamstrung.

Labor is committed to making sure that any changes to military superannuation are understood and properly considered by the wider defence and ex-service community and are in their long term interest.

For this reason, Labor commits to publicly releasing the report and will conduct extensive public consultations about its contents and recommendations.

This will provide for a fair and reasonable approach to be developed, with input from the defence and ex-service community.

Mental health

A Rudd Labor Government is committed to ensuring the very best mental health support is available for ADF personnel and the ex-service community.

While mental health support and services are available, these continue to be patchy for some members, particularly at key transition points, such as when commencing in the ADF, preparing to transition out of the force or resettling into civilian life.

A Rudd Labor Government will seek to build and reinforce a comprehensive spectrum of mental health services for both former and serving ADF members to prevent them from 'falling through the cracks' between mental health services.

This service spectrum will also take into account the difficult transition from services provided by Defence to those provided by the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA).

A Rudd Labor Government will implement an ADF Mental Health Lifecycle Package of mental health research and innovative interventions, in partnership with the Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health (ACPMH).

The Lifecycle Approach seeks to fill gaps and integrate service planning across the four distinct stages of an ADF member's career:

1. Entry into the ADF.
2. During service.
3. On transition/discharge.
4. Upon resettlement into civilian life.

Labor Government will work with the ACPMH on psychological resilience building initiatives upon entry into the ADF to support new recruits, and will provide funds to the ACPMH for it to develop a system of routine mental health checks to improve screening, prevention and early intervention.

These checks will be complemented by other measures to support better mental health across the service 'lifecycle', such as an additional \$1 million for the Applied Suicide and Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) Program to provide more information and training sessions in rural and regional areas; increased financial assistance and participation; expanding the range of programs offered by ASIST trainers; and the commitment to hold an inquiry into suicide in the ex-service community.

Improve the transition management process

Improving the transition process for servicemen and servicewomen leaving the ADF will be a priority for a Rudd Labor Government.

The transition process must focus on delivering the best support and care to our veterans and their families.

Labor recognises that there needs to be a greater understanding of the pressures on young veterans transitioning out of the service, and a more proactive approach to providing them and their families with the support and care they require during this process.

As part of the mental health lifecycle package for ADF personnel, a Rudd Labor Government will conduct a transition case management pilot and a family support trial in Townsville.

Labor will also conduct a study of barriers to veterans' social and occupational rehabilitation and an education campaign for this group.

The trials and study will be developed in conjunction with the Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health, and are part of Labor's 'lifecycle' approach to planning mental health services for serving and former ADF members.

The trials will be evaluated by the ACPMH, and will help to improve transition management.

Labor will ensure the very best mental health support is available for ADF personnel and the ex-service community

A Rudd Labor Government will also establish an inter-departmental working group to examine ways of rationalising the administrative burden on veterans and ex-service personnel who have to deal with multiple agencies in processing their claims.

Examine military compensation arrangements

Labor has received a number of complaints regarding the operation of the current military compensation schemes. In response to these complaints and requests from the ex-service community, a Rudd Labor Government will examine the Military Compensation system, covering:

- The operation to date of the Military and Rehabilitation Compensation Act 2004.
- The legislative schemes that govern military compensation prior to the 2004 Act and any anomalies that exist within these schemes.
- The level of medical and financial care provided to Defence personnel injured during peacetime service.

This work will be done in conjunction with the inter-departmental working group to streamline and rationalise the administration of the compensation systems administered by DVA.

The review will also be tasked with considering the suitability of access to military compensation schemes for members of the Australian Federal Police who have been deployed overseas.

The full terms of reference and structure of the review will be determined in consultation with relevant stakeholders and Ex-Service Organisations.

Cadets

A Rudd Labor Government will maintain the Cadet program.

The Cadet program is a valuable initiative through which many thousands of young people are challenged and their self esteem enhanced through direct military experience.

The Cadet program is an important source of recruitment for the ADF. 30 per cent of the young Australians who serve in the Cadets for over two years join the ADF.

The Cadet program provides 9 per cent of entrants to the permanent ADF, 18 per cent of the ADF's lower ranks and 50 per cent of the most senior star ranks of the ADF. In addition, 25 per cent of Reservists were formerly Cadets.

Under Labor, a vibrant and well equipped Cadet program will continue.

Defence legal

Labor has continued to press the Government to meet its own common sense test in order to resolve the hundreds of outstanding litigation cases involving the Department of Defence.

Labor believes that many protracted and vexatious legal proceedings do not provide fair outcomes for serving and former ADF personnel, nor value for taxpayer dollars.

Labor will maintain a vibrant and well equipped Cadet program.

Under the Howard Government, poor and unaccountable management of Defence Legal has become a significant budget risk.

In February 2007, approximately 65 per cent of Defence's litigation cases had been active for more than one year, with more than 140 cases having lasted for more than five years. These cases involve asbestos litigation, F111 Deseal Reseal compensation, and personal injury relating to the HMAS Melbourne/Voyager collision in 1964.

Labor will request the Auditor General to conduct a full audit of Defence Legal, to ensure that taxpayers' funds are not being wasted on defending the indefensible, and to prompt improvements to standards of efficiency and conduct in Defence legal policy.

Labor will establish a Parliamentary Committee Inquiry into the adequacy of the Howard Government's response to the health and support needs of RAAF Deseal/Reseal workers and their families.

Four families are currently seeking ex-gratia payments for the suicide of their sons following bullying and harassment in the ADF. The Howard Government has sat on their claims for over two years and has refused to consider their claims.

A Rudd Labor Government will immediately meet with these families to progress the resolution of their claims as a matter of priority.

Commissioner for HMAS Melbourne cases

A remaining area of protracted litigation claims is those of HMAS Melbourne survivors of the Melbourne/Voyager collision in 1964, which killed 82 Defence personnel.

Under a previous Labor Government, a settlement scheme was established to settle claims for those who were on HMAS Voyager.

However, the Howard Government's handling of claims arising from HMAS Melbourne survivors has been the subject of public concern, with allegations that the Government has attempted to string out cases, and has acted occasionally as a vexatious litigant.

Currently, mediation is offered, but it is alleged that the Howard Government has been reluctant to facilitate this more efficient process.

A Rudd Labor Government will appoint a Commissioner to advise the Government on how best to progress the finalisation and mediation of remaining HMAS Melbourne cases, and to oversee the Department's conduct with respect to litigating or mediating these cases.

Labor will also request the Auditor General to consider the Department's handling of remaining cases as part of its audit of Defence Legal.

This will ensure that under a Rudd Labor Government, these claims will be handed more responsibly with respect to both the defence budget and former HMAS Melbourne personnel.