

# New ministers take up the reins

**Alan Griffin** is the new Minister for Veterans' Affairs.

Before the election he had been Opposition spokesman on Veterans' Affairs since 2005.

Other shadow portfolios in which he has had experience include sport and recreation; and consumer affairs, consumer protection and consumer health.

The Minister for Veterans' Affairs oversees income support, compensation, care and commemoration programs for more than 400,000 veterans and their widows, widowers and dependants.

He is responsible for the Veterans' Affairs portfolio, including the:

- Department of Veterans' Affairs;
- Repatriation Commission;
- Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission;
- Office of Australian War Graves;
- Australian War Memorial;
- Veterans' Review Board;
- Repatriation Medical Authority; and
- Specialist Medical Review Council.

Born in Melbourne, Mr Griffin was educated in Victoria before moving to Canberra to study at the Australian National University.

After acquiring an Arts degree he returned to Melbourne, working in the public service, the union movement, and for members of parliament and several government ministers.

## The Opposition

**Bronwyn Bishop** is the Opposition spokesperson on Veterans' Affairs.

She was Minister for Aged Care 1998–2001; Minister for Defence Industries, Science and Personnel 1996–98.

Most recently she chaired the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Human Services.

**Joe Hockey** is the new Opposition spokesman on health.

In the Howard Government he was most recently Minister for Workplace Relations.

His other ministerial experience has included the portfolios of small business and tourism; and financial services and regulation.



*Alan Griffin, the new Minister for Veterans' Affairs*



*Joel Fitzgibbon, the new Minister for Defence*

## Defence of the nation

In the portfolio of **Defence**, Labor's announced policies in the lead-up to the election were:

- Withdrawing, after consulting the US, 500 Australian troops serving in Iraq
- Boosting Australia's contribution to fighting terrorism in Afghanistan
- Defence jobs located in South Australia
- Creation of a national security policy
- A new approach to Australia's arc of instability

## Intentions for the aged, disabled and carers

In the area of **Aged Care, Disability, Carers & Social Inclusion** policies announced by the Labor Party in the lead-up to the election included:

- Appointment of an Ambassador for Ageing
- Fresh ideas for transition from hospital to aged care
- Support for a Senate inquiry into cost-of-living pressures on older Australians
- An intention to tackle the hospital/nursing home blame game; and
- Support for Dementia Awareness Month

## And how much is all this going to cost?

The election commitment costing, under the Charter of Budget Honesty Act 1998, requires political parties to request from the Department of Finance and Administration an assessment of costing for every one of their promises.

All these can be accessed at [www.electioncostings.gov.au](http://www.electioncostings.gov.au)

One that will be of interest to both veterans and the general public is the nursing package, which promises:

- Bonuses to up to 7,750 nurses who have been out of the health workforce for more than 12 months to return to work in hospitals; and
- Five hundred new places will be provided in 2008 and an additional 1,000 new places annually from 2009.

The estimated cost is \$37 million.

An additional 500 Australian Federal Police (AFP) recruits will be taken in over five years; a \$5 million per annum AFP recruitment and retention program will be launched.

These will cost \$113.1 million over four years (\$186.7 million over five

years) based on current on-cost calculations.

Others of interest include broadband for seniors; appointment of an Ageing Ambassador to promote respect for and the value of older Australians; extending automatic entitlement to the war widows' pension to widows and widowers of TTI and intermediate rate DVA pensioners; investing up to \$220.3 million over four years to establish up to 30 GP super clinics around Australia; increasing by 50% the

telephone allowance for age pensioners (including Veterans' Affairs pensioners, Commonwealth Seniors Health Care Card holders, disability support pensioners and Carer Payment recipients) who have home internet connection; establishing a \$15 million seniors' internet fund to establish internet kiosks in key community locations such as senior citizens' centres and neighbourhood houses; and contributing \$5.1 million to a new Asia-Pacific Centre for Civil Military Cooperation.

**Joel Fitzgibbon** has been appointed Minister for Defence in the new Government. He was shadow minister for Defence from December 2006.

He was first elected to the Federal Parliament as Member for Hunter in March 1996.

In succeeding parliaments he has served as Opposition spokesman on Small Business and Tourism, to which Resources was added in July 2003.

In December 2003 he was appointed to the Mining, Energy and Forestry shadow portfolios.

After the 2004 federal election he was appointed shadow Assistant Treasurer, shadow minister for Revenue and shadow minister for Banking & Financial Services. To these shadow responsibilities were added, in July 2005, Small Business and Competition.

Before entering Parliament he spent 10 years in the motor industry as a small-business operator. He served eight years as a Cessnock City councillor, including a term as Deputy Mayor. He is a former director of the Hunter-Manning Tourist Authority.

He completed a graduate certificate in Business Administration at Newcastle University in 2004 and had previously studied economics, politics and law at the University of New England, completed trade qualifications and studied small business at NSW TAFE.

He has a keen interest in sport and in his younger days played first-grade rugby league for Cessnock.

He lives in Cessnock with his wife Dianne and their three children — Caitlin, Jack and Grace. Dianne has been a small-business operator for 20 years in the personal-services sector.

## The Opposition

Opposition Senate Leader **Nick Minchin** is shadow minister for Defence. Most recently he had been Minister for Finance and Administration since 2001.

Other ministerial experience includes the portfolios of industry, science and resources; and Minister assisting the PM. His recreations are listed as family, reading, cycling, swimming, football, travel and, according to *Who's Who in Australia*, "booting".

## NATO medal for Diggers in Afghanistan

Australian Defence Force personnel serving alongside their North Atlantic Treaty Organisation counterparts in Afghanistan will be able to accept and wear the NATO medal.

The NATO medal with clasp "ISAF" is awarded for 30 days' service in Afghanistan in support of ISAF.

The medal may be awarded posthumously also and both Trooper David Pearce and Sergeant Matthew Locke will be awarded the NATO medal.

Arrangements will be made to present this medal to their families at an appropriate time.

ADF members deployed to Afghanistan on Operation Slipper are also eligible for the Australian Active Service Medal with clasp "ICAT" and the Afghanistan Campaign Medal.