

Wednesday, 17 September 2008

SEEKING VETERANS VIEWS

The Minister for Veterans' Affairs Michael Atkinson will establish a Veterans' Advisory Council (V.A.C) to help take the views of ex-servicemen and women directly to the Cabinet table.

"The Rann Government believes that involving the veterans' community more intimately in high level decision-making can only achieve better results," Mr Atkinson said.

"The Veterans' Advisory Council will enable veterans' to speak to the State Government with one voice. It will be the principal source of advice to me as the Veterans' Affairs Minister," he said.

Ex-servicemen and women, their families and representative groups are invited to discuss the new Council from **2 p.m. on Tuesday 30 September at the Drill Hall, Torrens Parade Ground, Adelaide.**

"The Council will be headed by an independent Chair and the other members will be drawn from all spheres of the large and diverse South Australian veterans' community," Mr Atkinson said.

"I'm keen to hear the ideas of the veteran community about the establishment of the new Council. Especially at this early stage, it's important that we get the Council started on the right foot," he said.

"I've already written to 35 of South Australia's ex-service organisations asking them to come to the meeting, but the invitation goes out to the whole veterans' community – including families of ex-servicemen and women," Mr Atkinson said.

"Veterans and their loved ones can sometimes find it difficult to navigate the bureaucracy and have their concerns addressed. My appointment as the Veterans' Affairs Minister and the creation of the V.A.C. will go a long way to making life easier for veterans and their families," Mr Atkinson said.

"It's anticipated that the V.A.C. will also play an advocacy role, putting forward the concerns of South Australian veterans at a Commonwealth level," he said.

The South Australian Veterans' Affairs Ministry was announced on ANZAC Day this year. Since then, the Minister has been active in securing the purchase of Major Peter Badcoe's Victoria Cross, opening the Tom 'Diver' Derrick Bridge and beginning the construction of an Aboriginal war memorial.

"I encourage all interested people to attend the meeting and I look forward to hearing ideas about the new Veterans' Advisory Council."