

## **RSA**

### Principles

The Progressive Party is committed to a fair go society in which all citizens are equally entitled to share in the full benefits of living in New Zealand and its communities. We are also committed to ensuring that the community looks after those who have been disadvantaged either by birth or by accident (including injury in military activities) and we accept that there is a general responsibility regarding such citizens. We fully endorse the principles enunciated by the Law Commission therefore as the basis for the treatment of our veterans.

### Pension rates

The benefits received by any New Zealand citizen should in our view when totalled be sufficient to support the recipient at a decent level of comfort and one which allows the fullest possible and desired participation in the affairs of our communities. War disablement pension rates should reflect that principle.

We endorse the principle of indexation of benefits although the level at which such indexation is set and how it is calculated depends on the level of resources available to the government in office. Clearly, for example, if taxes are cut then the level of those resources is commensurately reduced.

### ACC and equitable basis

The Progressive Party sees injuries or disabilities sustained in military operations as in principle no different to any other accident and it is therefore consistent to match the benefits received with those available under Accident Compensation. We do not believe, however, that the case has been made for a veteran increment.

### Ex-gratia payments

Injuries or disabilities clearly resulting from whatever source as a consequence of military service in Vietnam (including cancers) should be treated as accident conditions for compensation purposes.

### Taxation paid by veterans

This matter, as your letter sets out, was the subject of debate during the Joint Working Group but no agreement could be reached. Nevertheless the RNZRSA put its signature to the agreement in total and we are disappointed that notwithstanding this the matter – which we imagined was closed by the signing – has been raised once more. That said, if any claimant can produce new and

significant facts concerning it the Progressive Party would be agreeable to this specific matter being re-opened without commitment to the outcome.

#### Access to pensions

The Progressive Party does not have a policy on the questions raised under this heading but is ready to discuss the points made on their merits if returned to government.

#### RNZRSA welfare infrastructure

The case for continuing funding of the services provided by the RNZRSA and the level at which any such funding might occur would have to be the subject of a case to be made by the RNZRSA subsequent to the election and prior to each annual Budget, taking into account the priorities and preferences of the parties forming a government. No government of whatever complexion can give a commitment to continuing funding of a non-governmental organisation on an open ended basis.

#### Service medal

The Progressive Party does not support the issue of a medal on such an indiscriminate basis for service alone. Medals are by definition an acknowledgement of service beyond the ordinary.

#### Medal heritage

The Progressive Party does not believe that any political party can credibly claim that they have the power in practice to prevent the sale of decorations and medals by the recipients or their families, no matter how reprehensible we consider this practise to be. We would prefer a situation in which the medals were either retained by the family or returned to the government for safe keeping (especially the latter in respect of medals of historical significance). We do not believe that this can be achieved by compulsion.

#### Defence policy

The Progressive Party has a comprehensive defence policy which is available on [www.progressiveparty.org.nz](http://www.progressiveparty.org.nz). Broadly it is a policy based upon the philosophy that a peacekeeping role for our military is the principal guarantee of security in our region. This does not rule out a combat capability but recognises that a small nation needs to marshal its resources in the most efficient and effective manner. We do not see our defence capability as little more than a small cog in a much larger whole.

#### War veterans' homes and hospitals

Mr Anderton as leader of the Progressive Party played a central instrumental role in ensuring the continuing existence of the veterans' homes and hospitals. The basis of their survival was negotiated with those with extensive military experience and a central interest in the retention of these facilities, and there has been no indication that we are aware of that the people concerned are dissatisfied with the outcomes. Until the case is made for a change the status quo should prevail.

Jim Anderton

**M P for Wigram and Leader of the Progressive Party**