



Sharon Grierson MP
Federal Member for Newcastle

Media Release

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FEARS FOR VETERANS' HOME CARE IN NEWCASTLE

Around 450 veterans in Newcastle and the Hunter face an uncertain Christmas after their local provider of Veterans' Home Care (VHC) services did not have its contract renewed by the Howard Government.

In Federal Parliament today the Member for Newcastle, Sharon Grierson, called on the Government to review the decision, which could also see 35 local workers lose their jobs.

Newcastle & District Nursing Services - which has been providing services such as personal care, domestic assistance, home and garden maintenance and respite care to veterans and war widows and widowers since 2001 - did not have its contract renewed, despite a 98% client satisfaction rating.

"VHC clients are the most vulnerable in our veteran community – many suffer from chronic disease, dementia, post traumatic stress and other neurological disorders," Ms Grierson said. "Given the intensely personal nature of the services provided under VHC, veterans often bond with their carers and have the right to expect continuity of care wherever possible."

"Regrettably, in what has become a trend under the Howard Government - with recent examples in migrant and apprenticeship services - contracts have been awarded to large national companies ahead of local organisations with a proven track record in our region."

"With less than 18 days to go before the start of the new contracts, I call on the Minister to overturn this seemingly inequitable and potentially calamitous decision."

"At the very least, the Minister should ensure continuity of care for the 450 veterans by allowing them to stay with the NDNS while an inquiry into the tender process is conducted."

"This is the least the Government can do for the 450 veterans facing great uncertainty and the 35 local NDNS employees facing redundancy."

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