



THE HON JOSH FRYDENBERG MP
Treasurer

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Minister for Veterans' Affairs
Minister for Defence Personnel
Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC

JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

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FAST-TRACKING SUPPORT TO SEATO DOCTORS AND NURSES

The Coalition Government is fast-tracking delivery of the Department of Veterans' Affairs Gold Card for members of the Australian civilian surgical and medical teams who provided medical aid, training and treatment to local Vietnamese people during the Vietnam War.

This follows a decision in the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook that, after nearly 50 years, justice is being done for this group of brave Australian doctors and nurses for their selfless contribution as members of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO).

This support has been brought forward a year earlier, from 1 July 2019, to provide these doctors and nurses with the support and access to medical treatments they need.

Eligible members of the Australian civilian surgical and medical teams will be able to submit an application for the Gold Veteran Card as soon as the Bill has passed the Parliament, which will be available on the DVA website www.dva.gov.au.

Treasurer Josh Frydenberg said the Government has listened to the concerns of these men and women and acknowledged the importance of providing them with a Gold Veteran Card as soon as possible.

"This measure will ensure eligible former members of those teams are able to gain access to treatment for all injuries or illnesses, not just those that may have arisen as a result of their employment in Vietnam," Mr Frydenberg said.

"During the Vietnam War, about 240 doctors and 210 nurses, and a small number of administrative and technical personnel worked in Vietnam under contract with the then Department of External Affairs.

"They played a significant part in Australia's contribution to the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) aid program in South Vietnam between 1964 and 1972, providing medical aid in Vietnamese civilian hospitals and training to local medical staff."

Mr Chester said this measure recognises that while the medical teams were not under the direct command and control of the Australian Defence Force during the Vietnam War, they were exposed to hazards and dangers as a result of working in a conflict zone for the Australian Government.

"These professionals put their lives and careers on hold to voluntarily travel to a warzone to provide much needed medical assistance and training, and I am pleased to see this new measure being implemented this year," Mr Chester said.

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