



## Tax Dollars for the Taliban – But not for ex-Diggers

The Rudd Government has announced that Australia will donate \$25m to an Afghanistan Government trust fund to help integrate former Taliban fighters into Afghan society.

The same Government steadfastly refuses to ensure that former Australian Defence Force men and women have a retirement scheme that maintains their superannuation pension's buying power.

Ex-diggers are tied to the Consumer Price Index (CPI), abandoned over a decade ago for other Commonwealth pensions because it does not protect pension purchasing power.

The Taliban dollars would fund the first few years of decent indexation for military superannuation pensioners, using the exact same indexation method that Mr Rudd's government rightly uses for age pensions.

Meanwhile, independent observers say that the Taliban dollars will reward bad behaviour by only paying those who fought against Australian diggers, ignoring Afghans who helped us.

*"Defence Force people feel more than slighted when the Government says it can afford to donate to a fund to help those who fought against Australians but cannot afford to look after its own ex-service men and women,"* Defence Force Welfare Association President David Jamison said today.

*"DFWA welcomes initiatives to promote peace in Afghanistan,"* Mr Jamison added.

*"But we do not accept that the Government can cry poor when dealing with the Nation's ex-service men and their families while lavishing tax dollars on the nation's enemies."*

*"And what happens when the Rudd Government's Taliban dollars are gone? Will the repatriated Taliban fighters go back to killing Australians?"*

DFWA notes that Foreign Minister Smith can give no assurances as to how the Taliban dollars will be spent, other than to say the funds will be under the oversight of the 'international community'. It seems that the Rudd Government is happy to trust other governments, some of which are breathtakingly corrupt, while ignoring its own ex-service constituents.

*"It is way past time for the Government to take action to help give ex-service men and women a decent retirement,"* said Mr Jamison.

*"How can the Government find dollars to reward the Taliban but refuse the dollars needed to protect the purchasing power of military superannuation pensions?"*

DFWA's National Executive will be discussing the implications of this disturbing development at its meeting in Melbourne next week.

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