

[Sailors Battle For Recognition of Veteran Status: Neale Maynard & Lou Robson, The Courier Mail, p 9](#)

FORMER Royal Australian Navy sailors, from left, Allan Smith and John Carlyon with veterans' advocate Noel Payne, who are seeking Federal Government recognition of their active service in the 1950s. Picture: BRUCE LONG

By NEALE MAYNARD
and LOU ROBSON

AUSTRALIAN sailors whose ships bombarded the Malayan coast during the communist insurgency in the 1950s are waging a new battle after being denied active-service status.

The men, who served on the HMAS Anzac and other ships during the Malayan Emergency, have accused the Federal Government of betraying them by refusing to formally acknowledge they were on active service when they shelled Malayan communist positions in 1956.

In the run-up to Anzac Day on Friday, the men are lobbying the Government for the Naval General Service Medal and the Return from Active Service Badge, which leads to entitlements under the Veterans' Act.

Veterans' advocate Noel Payne said despite the navy's role in the conflict, it was excluded from the Repatriation Act, Far East Strategic Reserve, Malaya, of 1956.

John Carlyon, who served on the HMAS Anzac when it bombarded the Malayan coast in 1956, said he was disappointed that the Federal Government had failed to recognise the navy's active-service role in the conflict.

Mr Payne said Australian

admirals had twice asked the British for approval to issue the imperial Navy General Service Medal. "Twice, they were told to issue it if they saw fit. Last time they went back and said, 'Well, which British ships qualified?'" he said.

"Britain came back and said none after 1955, so our admirals have concluded that, therefore, no Australian ships have qualified."

Allan "Weed" Smith, who served on the HMAS Melbourne, said naval personnel



who served in Malaya were the only people serving in the region between 1955 and 1960 who were excluded from veterans' entitlements.

Mr Payne said naval veterans of Malaya also were angry that two men who died

during the Malayan emergency were not on the Honour Roll. One of the dead was Able Seaman Gunner Robert Spooner, who was killed when a British shell exploded on HMAS Tobruk.

A memorial service will be

held on Thursday in Brisbane's Anzac Square for Mr Spooner and another sailor, Alan Cooper.

A spokesman for Defence Support Minister Bronwyn Bishop said the Government was reviewing the issue of veterans' entitlements for naval personnel who served in Malaya.