

# Pension perplexity explained

IN all of the past columns for veterans out there, I have attempted to provide the veteran community with advice on a variety of subjects and issues that can have short or long-term effects on those families and/or veterans concerned.

The one issue that keeps arising time and time again is that of the Gold Card and the associated benefits for war widows and widowers.

In an attempt to clear the air and make this issue very clear to all concerned, I will again try to cover this subject in this column.

A Gold Card CANNOT be transferred to a veteran's surviving spouse under any circumstances.

With the passing of a veteran, who was the holder of a Gold Card, the surviving spouse may be eligible for a war widow's or widower's pension and the associated Gold Card if that veteran was in receipt of either of the following type of benefit from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The veteran was receiving either of the following pension benefits — Special Rate of Pension (TPI); Temporary Special Rate of Pension (TTI); Intermediate Rate of Pension — Extreme Disablement Adjustment Rate of Pension (EDA); or was a PoW.

For a veteran who had been in receipt of any of these benefits, the spouse will automatically be contacted by the Department of Veterans Affairs and arrangements will then be made for the issue of a new appropriate Gold Card and payment of the associated pension benefits, to that nominated surviving spouse.

Under these circumstances, the Department acts very rapidly in providing that assistance necessary to the surviving spouse at a time when much compassion and understanding is needed.

In all other cases with the passing of a veteran, the cause of death has to be relative to that veterans service, that is, the disability that was the cause of death must be able to be traced to that veteran's service.

There are very specific rules and regulations that must be followed when this situation occurs.

I have made this point before, again, for those veterans who are not sure of just where they stand at this time, please call in to your local RSL sub-branch, or make a visit to the nearest Veterans Affairs Network office, and seek out the advice and assistance necessary for your particular case. The advocates and pension officers in the sub-branches, or the staff at the VAN offices, are available to provide all the help they can on matters related to the support of all veterans in our community.

- RALPH THOMPSON (Courtesy Gold Coast Sun)