



10 APR 2013

Senator the Hon. Michael Ronaldson

Liberal Senator for Victoria
Shadow Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Shadow Minister Assisting the
Leader of the Opposition on the Centenary of ANZAC

The Hon Peter Dutton MP
Shadow Minister for Health and Ageing
Federal Member for Dickson
PO Box 2012
STRATHPINE QLD 4500


Dear Mr Dutton,

On 28 March 2013 I received representations from your office on behalf of Mr Mark Raison concerning a letter he received from the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

I have taken the opportunity to read the correspondence Mr Raison have referred to and agree that the letter is vague and difficult to understand. On the basis of this information I have today written to the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, the Hon Warren Snowdon MP, seeking his advice about the matter. Should the Minister respond I will ensure a copy is forwarded to you.

Depending upon any Ministerial response, I will raise this matter with the Department at the forthcoming Senate Estimates hearings in June. It is particularly troubling because the letter to you is dated 14 March 2013 and the legislation which would enact this particular provision was not introduced into the House of Representatives until 22 March 2013.

As I understand it and following the Government's belated response to the Campbell Review of Military Compensation Arrangements, the Government has agreed to extend White Card coverage to those *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988* (SRC Act) clients who have accepted conditions. This means that a SRC Act client will be able to receive treatment for their accepted condition at Australian Government expense without the need to pay for the treatment first and then seek reimbursement from the Department of Veterans' Affairs. This streamlining is supported by the Coalition.

The letter indicates that Mr Raison may have dual eligibility for his accepted conditions under the SRC Act and the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986* (VE Act). The letter seems to indicate that if Mr Raison requires treatment for his accepted conditions he should use his Gold Card to have that treatment undertaken, with costs for all medical conditions met by the Australian Government. Further, if Mr Raison requires pharmaceuticals to treat his accepted conditions, he will be required to meet the cost of those at the concessional rate of \$5.90 per script (up to 60 scripts per calendar year) before the safety net cuts in and he will be able to receive his pharmaceuticals at no cost.

Further, if Mr Raison has 'qualifying service' under the VE Act he may qualify for the reimbursement of his out of pocket pharmaceutical expenses under the Veterans' Pharmaceutical Reimbursement

Scheme. As I do not have access to Mr Raison's DVA records I cannot tell whether this is the case for him and would therefore encourage him to seek advice of the Department about his eligibility.

With regards to the 10 December 2013 start date, the Government's response indicates that subject to passage of legislation, the new White Card treatment arrangements will begin from 10 December 2013. I have indicated publicly that subject to the support of the veteran and ex-service community, the Coalition will not prevent passage of this legislation.

I agree with Mr Raison that the Department's advice is poorly written and very confusing. I will raise this matter with the Department in June and will ensure any advice received is forward to Mr Raison for his information.

Should Mr Raison have further concerns he is more than welcome to contact me directly. Thank you for bringing Mr Raison's concerns to my attention.

Yours sincerely,

SENATOR THE HON. MICHAEL RONALDSON

Shadow Minister for Veterans' Affairs

Shadow Minister Assisting the Leader of the Opposition on the Centenary of ANZAC

- 8 APR 2013



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The Hon Warren Snowdon MP
Minister for Veterans' Affairs
Minister for Defence Science and Personnel
Minister for Indigenous Health
Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on the Centenary of Anzac
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600


Dear Minister,

I have received a number of representations from veterans confused about the contents of a letter dated 14 March 2013 from the Department regarding changes to treatment arrangements for *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation act 1988* (SRC Act) clients. A copy of the letter is attached.

The letter is confusing and many veterans have contacted me asking why they are now being asked to pay more for treatment.

Further, I note that the letters have been sent a week before the relevant legislation has been introduced to give effect to the proposed changes to treatment arrangements under the SRC Act. This is despite the Government Response to the Review of Military Compensation Arrangements making it clear that these changes, providing White Cards to eligible ex-service people for their treatment, was subject to parliamentary approval. Given parliament has not yet given its approval to these arrangements (parliament had not even seen the legislation when the letters were sent) how can it be appropriate that these changes are communicated as a *fait accompli* by the Department to potentially affected veterans? I would be concerned if the Department has taken the Coalition's in-principle support for these changes as justification for pre-empting parliament's decision on this matter.

The letter also indicates that veterans will now have to pay \$5.90 for their scripts under the proposed new arrangements. This seems to indicate a change in existing arrangements. Can you clarify whether there has been a change in arrangements and if so why that change is being made?

Yours sincerely,

SENATOR THE HON. MICHAEL RONALDSON
Shadow Minister for Veterans' Affairs
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