

## What are the veteran community's Special Needs?

For many veterans and their dependants, wartime experience has impacted on their life's journey and resulted in circumstances in older life that vary from complex medical requirements to the need for high levels of emotional and culturally specific support.

The core of the veteran culture lies in the bonds of mateship, commemoration for those who did not return, and support for the dependants of deceased comrades. Also many have experienced personal hardships that have contributed to health problems in later life.

The impact of war-related memories associated with ageing processes such as grief and loss, depression, social isolation and dementia can be significant. The combination of PTSD with a dementing illness is especially challenging for the person as well as for family and staff.

## Providing for veterans' special needs

As they grow older many veterans seek the comfort and reassurance of an environment that 'feels familiar' and understands and values past experiences. DVA is working with DoHA and aged care service providers to ensure that the veteran community continues to be supported into old age and the growing need for culturally responsive residential and community aged care is being met.

ESOs also contribute by assisting older veterans at home and in residential care, to remain connected to the veteran community and participate in commemoration activities.

Veterans have made an important contribution to the quality of life benefits enjoyed by the whole community. Achieving 'special needs status' demonstrates the debt of gratitude owed to the veteran community and our belief in continuing to honour those who have served in the defence of our nation.

### For further information on Aged Care

Planning, contact DoHA on:

**1800 500 853**

### For information on this brochure

contact DVA on:

**133 254**

The National Ex-Service Round Table on Aged Care is a Ministerial advisory committee comprised of members of the Ex-Service organisations and affiliated aged care providers.

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## SPECIAL NEEDS STATUS for the Veteran Community

A Guide to understanding the  
meaning of Special Needs Status in  
Aged Care Planning for Veterans

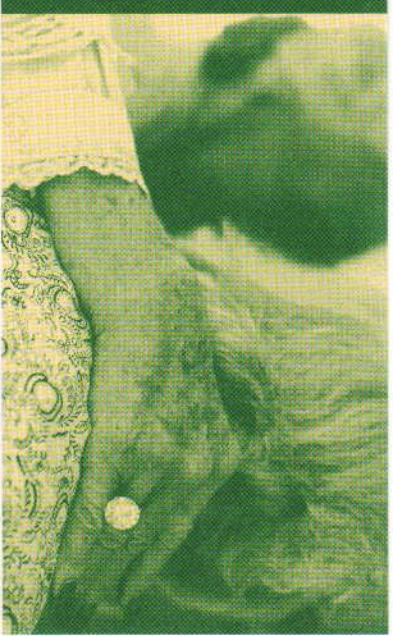
PREPARED BY  
THE NATIONAL EX-SERVICE  
ROUND TABLE ON AGED CARE  
FOR THE VETERAN COMMUNITY



Australian Government  
Department of Veterans' Affairs

# Introduction

This brochure provides an explanation for veterans and war widows about the meaning of 'special needs' status for the veteran community in Australian Government aged care planning.



## What is 'Special Needs' Status?

'Special needs' status is a term used in the Aged Care Act 1997 and applies to planning for Government funded aged care services. The Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA) is responsible for administering the legislation as well as managing the aged care program, including residential and community based care.

## Definition of 'People with Special Needs'

The term 'people with special needs' is currently defined in the legislation to include:

- People from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities,
- People from non-English speaking backgrounds,
- People who live in rural or remote areas,
- People who are financially or socially disadvantaged (e.g. homeless), and
- A veteran or ex-service member of the Australian Defence Force or of an allied defence force, or their spouse, widow or widower.

It is important for the veteran community and Government funded aged care services to know that the definition of a veteran under the Aged Care Act 1997 not only applies to Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) beneficiaries, but refers to a much larger group of people who are also deemed to have 'special needs status', for example veterans' wives / husbands, widows not classified as war widows and allied forces' veterans and their spouses. This can be confusing for the veteran community and aged care providers, as these people do not have DVA beneficiary cards that automatically signal their inclusion in the veteran 'special needs' status group.

## What is aged care planning?

Government aged care planning determines the number of residential and community aged care services in regions across Australia on a formula based on the number of persons 70 years and over. It is mandatory that annual aged care planning processes take account of all 'special needs' groups. However where a region is already relatively highly provided for, no new services will be allocated on the basis of the interests of a 'special needs' group.

## 'Special Needs Status' does not mean priority for an individual

Individuals from 'special needs' groups do not have any advantage over other members of the community when it comes to allocation of a particular place that has become vacant for whatever reason. A person's assessed need for care and services determines his/her priority for a vacant residential place or community package, although 'special needs' status is a factor which will be taken into consideration.

## Aged Care Services operated by Ex-Service Organisations (ESOs) are not disadvantaged

New aged care places and packages are allocated via a highly competitive process that considers the proposed aged care provider's ability to deliver high quality care to all 'special needs' groups as well as the wider aged community.

Any group (including ESOs) which claims a focus on 'special needs' should have a natural advantage in demonstrating specialist service outcomes but the outcomes must be demonstrated in the competitive process.