



The Hon De-Anne Kelly BE MP

Federal Member for Dawson

Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence

SENIORS ALLOWANCE TO BENEFIT GOLD CARD HOLDERS

More than 44 000 veterans and war widows will benefit from a 2005-06 Federal Budget initiative to extend the Australian Government's seniors concession allowance to older veterans who have a Gold Card, the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, De-Anne Kelly, said tonight.

Mrs Kelly said the Government had committed \$27.7 million over four years to assist Gold Card holders in meeting the cost of energy, rates, water and sewerage and motor registration.

"The seniors concession allowance was introduced for Commonwealth Seniors Health Card holders in December 2004, in line with the Howard Government's election commitment to help self-funded retirees maintain the lifestyle they deserve," she said.

"More than 290 000 Commonwealth Seniors Health Card holders have already benefited from the allowance from either DVA or Centrelink. This initiative will ensure an additional 44 000 Gold Card holders over veteran pension age, who do not already receive the seniors concession allowance or the twice yearly pensioners utilities allowance, will now get the support they need."

The seniors concession allowance is a non-taxable payment of \$200, paid in two instalments on 1 June and 1 December each year. The annual rate of the allowance is indexed twice yearly.

The Minister said Gold Card holders over veteran pension age, who did not already receive the seniors concession allowance or the utilities allowance, would automatically be paid the first instalment of their new entitlement as soon as practical after 1 December 2005.

"This Government previously extended the Gold Card to all veterans aged over 70 with qualifying service from any conflict, in recognition of their increased health needs as they grow older," Mrs Kelly said.

"This initiative recognises the special needs of Gold Card holders and ensures they receive support in meeting their utilities bills."

More information about the initiative is available at www.dva.gov.au.

Budget 2005-2006
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Extending seniors concession allowance to all Gold Card holders of veteran pension age

What funding is the Government committing to the initiative?

- ▶ The Government has committed \$27.7 million over the next four years to extend the seniors concession allowance to holders of the Repatriation Health Card – For All Conditions (Gold Card) who are over veteran pension age.

What have we done in the past?

- ▶ The seniors concession allowance was introduced in December 2004 as an election commitment to assist Commonwealth Seniors Health Card holders in meeting energy, rates, water and sewerage and motor registration costs.

What is new?

- ▶ The Government has extended the allowance to include Gold Card holders over veteran pension age, who are not already receiving the seniors concession allowance or the pensioners utilities allowance.

How will the initiative benefit the veteran community?

- ▶ Eligible Gold Card holders will receive a non-taxable payment. The seniors concession allowance is currently \$200 per year (indexed), paid in two instalments in June and December each year.

Who will benefit from the initiative?

- ▶ More than 44 000 veterans and war widows will benefit from the initiative.

When will the initiative commence?

- ▶ Eligible Gold Card holders will receive the first payment as soon as practical after 1 December 2005.
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