



Australian Government
Department of Veterans' Affairs

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Mr Ron Coxon OAM
National President
Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia
PO Box 89
HOUNVILLE TAS 7109


Dear Mr Coxon

Ambulance and Hospital Arrangements for the Veteran Community

I am writing to inform you of proposed changes to the arrangements which the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) has in place for the delivery of ambulance services, and for the proposed extension of Hospital Services Arrangements with State and Territory governments until June 2012.

Ambulance Services

Currently DVA contracts with individual States and Territories and a small number of private providers for ambulance services for eligible Gold and White Card holders. The new arrangements will put in place a single new agreement with each State and Territory for a simplified and uniform approach to subsidising the costs of these services.

It is proposed that the changes will commence on 1 July 2010. From that date, each State and Territory will be paid the same amount per eligible card holder in their jurisdiction.

The new arrangements will apply to all emergency and non-emergency services. An exception is the Royal Flying Doctor Service which is separately funded by the Australian Government.

The Australian Government remains committed to subsidising the costs of ambulance services for eligible veterans. These changes will not impact on veterans' access to ambulance services - they will continue to access services in line with the service arrangements operating within individual jurisdictions. It is expected that veterans will notice no change in services.

The current ambulance arrangements with DVA are complex and cumbersome to administer. With every jurisdiction, DVA deals with different fees, different formulas for calculating payments and varying levels of subsidy. Data collection and administration is costly both for DVA and service providers. These changes will ensure national consistency and a more streamlined approach between DVA and individual States and Territories.

LOVETT TOWER
13 KELTIE STREET
PHILLIP ACT 2606

GPO BOX 9998
CANBERRA ACT 2601
AUSTRALIA

TELEPHONE (02) 6289 6736
FACSIMILE (02) 6289 6257
INTERNET www.dva.gov.au

Saluting Their Service

In Western Australia and Tasmania, DVA contracts with some private ambulance providers in addition to the main ambulance provider who services the general community. DVA will be negotiating with those governments to confirm that there is no diminution in services to eligible veterans.

The Minister for Veterans' Affairs, the Hon Alan Griffin MP, has written to States and Territories outlining the new arrangements. The arrangements which currently operate will remain in place until July 2010.

Hospital Services Arrangements

Minister Griffin has also written to States and Territories about the current Hospital Services Arrangements.

Given the context of health reform now underway, the Australian Government intends to extend the existing Hospital Services Arrangements for an interim period until 30 June 2012.

It is proposed that this extension could operate through a deed of variation, extending the Arrangement's duration, and setting payment arrangements for the period.

Should you have any queries about this announcement, the contact in DVA is Ms Judy Daniel, National Manager Primary Care Policy Group on (02) 6289 6418 or by email judy.daniel@dva.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



Ian Campbell
Secretary

14. 1. 10



Repatriation Transport Scheme

Ambulance Services

Overview

This Factsheet briefly describes arrangements for ambulance services for eligible veterans and war widows/widowers when they attend a health provider for Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) approved medical treatment.

Who is eligible?

Gold Card

Gold Card holders (Repatriation Health Card – For All Conditions) are eligible for ambulance services for the treatment of all health conditions, subject to their clinical need.

White Card (Australian veterans)

Australian White Card holders (Repatriation Health Card – For Specific Conditions) are eligible for ambulance services for the treatment of an injury or disease which has been accepted by DVA as war or service related, subject to their clinical need.

Australian White Card holders are also eligible for ambulance services for the following medical conditions with DVA approval, whether war-caused or not, subject to their clinical need:

- malignant cancer (neoplasia)
- pulmonary tuberculosis
- post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- anxiety and/or depression.

White Card (overseas allied veterans)

A White Card is also issued to ex-service personnel who are eligible for treatment under agreements between the Australian Government and New Zealand, Canadian, South African and the United Kingdom governments for disabilities accepted as war-caused by their country of origin.

Emergency use of an ambulance – when does DVA accept financial liability?

- In a medical emergency, veterans and war widows/widowers with DVA treatment entitlements are eligible for ambulance transport to the nearest facility which meets their medical need. DVA defines an emergency as a

situation where a patient requires immediate treatment in circumstances where there is a serious threat to life or health.

- If there is a medical emergency and a Local Medical Officer (LMO) is not available, you or someone acting on your behalf may order ambulance transport.
 - DVA will only pay for emergency ambulance transport for White Card holders when the purpose relates to your accepted disability.
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Non-emergency use of an ambulance – when does DVA accept financial liability?

DVA will normally pay for a non-emergency ambulance trip if you meet one of the following criteria, subject to your treatment eligibility:

- require transport on a stretcher
- require treatment whilst in the ambulance
- are severely disfigured
- are incontinent to a degree that precludes the use of other forms of transport.

Note: Transport will be to or from the nearest facility to your residence, whether temporary or permanent, which can attend to your medical needs in a timely manner.

Non-emergency ambulance services in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania, Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory

Ambulance services in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania, Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory are arranged according to State or Territory health and ambulance authority guidelines. DVA's prior authorisation is *not* required.

Non-emergency ambulance services in South Australia and Western Australia

Ambulance services in Western Australia are provided according to the arrangements between DVA and the ambulance suppliers in that State. Ambulance services in South Australia require the LMO to contact DVA for prior authorisation before the veteran is transported in non-emergency situations.

Ambulance Services when travelling away from home within Australia

If you have been admitted to a hospital or medical centre when travelling away from the local area of your permanent residence, DVA **will not pay** for the journey to your permanent residence following your discharge from the hospital or medical centre. This is a private matter and is your responsibility. However, you may like to consider taking out private travel insurance to ensure you are not financially disadvantaged under these circumstances. In addition, DVA will not pay for a transfer to a hospital closer to your permanent residence unless it is clinically necessary.

On discharge DVA will pay for transport from the hospital or medical centre to your temporary residence by the most appropriate form of transport which matches your medical need e.g. a private vehicle, taxi or ambulance.

Ambulance services for non medical purposes

DVA does not pay for ambulance services which may be required for non medical purposes. An example would be the transfer of a frail aged veteran from one residential aged care facility to another via ambulance for personal reasons, such as moving residence where there is no clinical need to move. This is a private matter and DVA is not responsible for this or other similar types of transport.

Other Factsheets

Other Factsheets related to this topic include:

- *HSV02 Overview of the Repatriation Transport Scheme*
 - *HIP80 Transport Information for Health Providers*
 - *HSV60 Repatriation Health Card - For All Conditions (Gold)*
 - *HSV 61 Repatriation Health Card - For Specific Conditions (White)*
 - *HSV129 Before you Travel*
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More information

All DVA Factsheets are available from DVA offices, and on the DVA website at www.dva.gov.au.

You can phone DVA for the cost* of a local call on 133 254 or free call 1800 555 254 if you are outside a major city.

Note: * Use a normal landline phone if you can. Mobile phone calls may cost you more. Local call rates vary depending on your phone service provider.

You can send an email to DVA at: GeneralEnquiries@dva.gov.au.

You can get more help from any DVA office.