



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Veteran's Gold Card "Qualifying Service" confusing Veterans

Independent Member for New England, Tony Windsor has again criticised the Federal Government for its non-extension of the Veteran's Gold Card to ALL War Veterans following many interviews with Veterans from across the New England electorate who believed that they were now eligible for the Gold Card with the passage of the Veterans' Affairs Gold Card Extension Bill recently.

"A letter from National Party Senator, Sandy Macdonald to the editors of all newspapers in the New England electorate and probably in other electorates is adding further to the confusion," Mr Windsor said.

Senator Macdonald's letter starts off saying "**All** war veterans aged 70, with qualifying service, are now eligible.."

"No where in Senator Macdonald's letter, nor in fact in the Coalition's Election Policy Statement, is a definition of 'qualifying service' given. The Government initially, and then the Senator, has therefore raised the hopes of many Veterans who on application have then found that they haven't met the criteria.

Under the new legislation qualifying service still refers to 'those Veterans who have been in danger from hostile forces of the enemy'," Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor also points out that Senator Macdonald's letter states that "Under the changes: * Veterans who already receive benefits through the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) will receive a Gold Card before July 1".

"From representations made to me by Veterans who already receive some benefits, on their further application, they have been very disappointed and upset that they have been told that they are still ineligible because of this "qualifying service" definition.

Therefore, Senator Macdonald's letter is at best misleading," Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor does not see servicemen, whether they were sent overseas and were involved in overseas combat, or were sent overseas and did not see any conflict, but possibly could have been involved in conflict, as being significantly different from someone who volunteered and trained in Australia, who did not actually face a hostile enemy.

"The fact remains that we have servicemen who were prepared to volunteer, be trained and were asked to stay in Australia and were therefore a very significant deterrent to some other activity that may well have been planned for our home shores," Mr Windsor said.

It's another case of the big print giving and the fine print taking away," Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor reminded Veterans that a Veterans' Review Committee has been established to review Veterans' Entitlements and is now calling for submissions. Mr Windsor is urging Veterans still confused over their Gold Card eligibility to send submissions to The Hon John Clarke QC, Committee Chair, Review of Veterans' Entitlements, PO Box 9563, Deakin ACT 2600 with a copy to Mr Windsor. Submissions need to be received by April 18.

Further information from Tony Windsor on 0427 66 8868