

ADVOCATES' CORNER

By Ralph Thompson.

I apologise that some time has elapsed since I wrote the last column for all you veterans in the Burleigh Sub-Branch, I need a good smack – however I will try and be more prompt in the future.

The need to always ensure that the information provided is relevant and current is the main priority in the articles that I will provide to you.

In the last column I covered all the issues regarding the need to ensure that your spouse / partner was able to be looked after should you, the veteran, fall off the perch! This information is still there for your benefit and I am always available on the phone should any veteran feel the need to contact me, not just on this matter, but on anything relative to the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

However in recent weeks I have had numerous veterans and their wives contact me on just this matter of what happens if I fall off the perch / lose my husband ??? All were from RSL sub-branches within the Gold Coast, except for one from this sub-branch.

I realise that this subject has been covered many times in the past, but it still appears that there is a large number of veterans unsure of the requirements that **MUST** be met to ensure your wife / partner is looked after in the long term.

Where a veteran currently has a disability pension benefit of 100% or less, he should be seeking assistance to have this increased to the maximum entitlement of disability pension, which would ensure that should anything happen to him, his surviving spouse / partner will be looked after by the Department with a Gold Card and the appropriate widow's pension.

Whilst there is a requirement to meet certain criteria for these benefits, Advocates and Pension Officers are there to assist you, and will attempt to get that level of benefit to which you are entitled. Veterans' are proud and independent, but sometimes need a push to seek assistance to gain that benefit which will in the long term give a benefit to the surviving spouse / partner.

The final point that must be addressed is that of Proof of Identity. Many wives / partners have never had to provide evidence of just who they are – that is Birth Certificates / Marriage Certificates, etc, etc to the Department – this again is a task that the Advocate / Pension Officer will carry out for you – to ensure that the correct procedure is followed when the circumstances require such action.

Keep well and should you have any problems / questions, please contact me at any time – all the best.