

EXPLANATORY NOTE FOR TABLING

INSTRUMENT No.7 OF 1997

VETERANS' ENTITLEMENTS ACT 1986

SECTION 29

REPLACEMENT OF THE GUIDE TO THE ASSESSMENT OF RATES OF VETERANS' PENSIONS (GARP) EDITION NO. 4 BY EDITION NO. 5

The Minister for Veterans' Affairs has approved, in accordance with subsection 29(3) of the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986* (the Act) and with effect from 1 March 1998, the attached instruments:

- Instrument No.8 of 1997 that revokes the fourth edition of GARP, with effect from 1 March 1998; and
- Instrument No.9 of 1997 that is the fifth edition of GARP prepared by the Repatriation Commission under section 29 of the Act.

Background

Under Section 29 of the *Veterans' Entitlement Act 1986*, the Repatriation Commission prepares a document, known as the "Guide to the Assessment of Rates of Veterans' Pensions", that sets out criteria and methods for assessment of disability pensions. New editions of this document are periodically prepared by the Repatriation Commission.

The development of this fifth edition of GARP commenced with the commitment given by the Repatriation Commission to the ex-service organisations to review GARP 4 after it had been in operation for twelve months. GARP 4 became operational on 4 July 1994.

This version of GARP will become binding on the Commission and all other determining bodies from 1 March 1998 for all decisions made on and from that date.

Consultation

GARP5 has been developed by the Repatriation Commission, in consultation with a GARP Consultative Committee. The Committee was chaired by former Commissioner Major-General Arthur Fittock. The ex-service community was represented on the Committee by the Australian Veterans' and Defence Services Council and the Returned and Services League of Australia. The GARP Consultative Committee has met twelve times since it was constituted in October 1995.

As well as the input provided by the members of the GARP Consultative Committee, input was sought from the major ex-service organisations at national and State levels. A draft of GARP5 was distributed to the organisations on 31 July 1997.

After considering the responses received concerning the draft, the GARP Consultative Committee recommended appropriate changes and agreed to the final draft of GARP5 on 26 September 1997.

Summary of Changes

The main differences between GARP4 and GARP5 are that GARP5 has:

- ◆ a more logical, step-wise approach in each chapter to make the document more easily understood;
- ◆ an approach called "smoothing" has been adopted to avoid large changes in impairment ratings for conditions that deteriorate gradually;
- ◆ new impairment ratings of 2 points for diseases which are not negligible but would not be significant enough to attract a 5% impairment rating;
- ◆ a new chapter (chapter 4) on assessment of psychiatric disabilities that will provide for more consistent assessments (this chapter has been developed in consultation with leading experts in the field);
- ◆ new formulae to facilitate easier conversion to computer based systems;
- ◆ a new improved method for assessment of those respiratory conditions that result in loss of function in the smaller airways (chapter 1)
- ◆ included a greater range of amputations for assessment (chapter 3);
- ◆ removed some ambiguities in the previous GARP relating to assessment of musculo-skeletal disorders (chapter 3); and
- ◆ corrected several anomalies and errors in the previous version.