

# Anger over veterans' benefits

BY SUSIE WELDON

**W**AR veteran Chan Wong-chung, 77, is paralysed from a stroke and cannot feed or wash himself.

His wife, also in her 70s, suffered a mild stroke two weeks ago. Since then, Chan has had to move into residential care.

All government hospitals and infirmaries were full, so the old soldier had to enter the private Catholic Church-run St Mary's Old Age Home in Aberdeen.

Chan is paying more than \$2,000 a month - but the government says it cannot

reimburse his costs as a War Memorial pensioner because the free medical treatment scheme for war veterans covers only government or subvented facilities.

This was despite the fact that if he were in a government hospital bed, it would cost the taxpayer about \$2,000 a day.

War veterans' representatives said Chan's plight was indicative of the problems faced by Hongkong's increasingly old and frail veterans.

War veteran Jack Edwards said he and his brothers in arms were outraged at government preparations to take away their right to receive

medical treatment at the British Military Hospital and HMS Tamar clinic from April.

The move is being made despite a government request before the Finance Committee today for an extra \$820,000 to be paid to the military hospital for the treatment of war victims and their spouses.

"They've got a huge surplus and they're preaching that they're going to do things for the elderly and the sick, yet they're doing this to us," Edwards said. "I can't tell you how bitter I feel about it."

The plan was part of an extension of the free medical treatment scheme for war vic-

tims to all Hospital Authority public hospitals and clinics.

Edwards said this would mean having to wait for hours for treatment in public hospitals instead of being able to telephone for an appointment as at present.

Veteran Max Cheng said the changes would distress veterans: "All these things will mount up on these old people."

Cheng said many of the 240 veterans and widows were aged over 75, and were frail and in poor health.

Legislator Dr Leong Che-hung said he would query the request for more funding.

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