



Australian Government
Repatriation Medical Authority

REPATRIATION MEDICAL AUTHORITY

INSTRUMENT NO. 58 of 2012

VETERANS' ENTITLEMENTS ACT 1986
MILITARY REHABILITATION AND COMPENSATION ACT 2004

EXPLANATORY NOTES FOR TABLING

1. The Repatriation Medical Authority (the Authority), under subsection 196B(8) of the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986* (the VEA), revokes Instrument No. 73 of 2001, as amended by Instrument No. 42 of 2002, determined under subsection 196B(2) of the VEA concerning **otitis externa**.
2. The Authority is of the view that there is sound medical-scientific evidence that indicates that **otitis externa** and **death from otitis externa** can be related to particular kinds of service. The Authority has therefore determined pursuant to subsection 196B(2) of the VEA a Statement of Principles, Instrument No. 58 of 2012 concerning otitis externa. This Instrument will in effect replace the revoked Statements of Principles.
3. The provisions of the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004* (the MRCA) relating to claims for compensation commenced on 1 July 2004. Claims under section 319 of the MRCA for acceptance of liability for a service injury sustained, a service disease contracted or service death on or after 1 July 2004 are determined by the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission by reference to Statements of Principles issued by the Authority pursuant to the VEA.
4. The Statement of Principles sets out the factors that must as a minimum exist, and which of those factors must be related to the following kinds of service rendered by a person:
 - operational service under the VEA;
 - peacekeeping service under the VEA;
 - hazardous service under the VEA;
 - British nuclear test defence service under the VEA;
 - warlike service under the MRCA;
 - non-warlike service under the MRCA,

before it can be said that a reasonable hypothesis has been raised connecting otitis externa or death from otitis externa, with the circumstances of that service.

5. This Instrument results from an investigation notified by the Authority in the Government Notices Gazette of 30 June 2010 concerning otitis externa in accordance with section 196G of the VEA. The investigation involved an examination of the sound medical-scientific evidence now available to the Authority, including the sound medical-scientific evidence it has previously considered.

6. The contents of this Instrument are in similar terms as the revoked Instruments. Comparing this Instrument and the revoked Instruments, the differences include:
 - adopting the latest revised Instrument format, which commenced in 2005;
 - deleting the ICD code from the Instrument header;
 - revising the definition of 'otitis externa' in clause 3;
 - revising factors 6(a) & 6(m) concerning 'swimming, diving or participating in other aquatic activities';
 - revising factors 6(b) & 6(n) concerning 'therapeutic radiation';
 - new factors 6(c) & 6(o) concerning 'ionising radiation';
 - new factors 6(d) & 6(p) concerning 'trauma to the external ear canal';
 - revising factors 6(e) & 6(q) concerning 'a foreign object or implement';
 - revising factors 6(f) & 6(r) concerning 'a specified condition';
 - revising factors 6(g) & 6(s) concerning 'chronic suppurative otitis media';
 - revising factors 6(h) & 6(t) concerning 'diabetes mellitus';
 - revising factors 6(i) & 6(u) concerning 'an immunocompromised state';
 - revising factors 6(j) & 6(v) concerning 'a narrowing or obstruction of the external auditory canal';
 - revising factors 6(k) & 6(w) concerning 'blocking the external auditory canal';
 - new factors 6(l) & 6(x) concerning 'using a course of oral antibiotic therapy or otological therapy for the treatment of otitis externa' for otomycosis only;
 - deleting the factors concerning 'systemic inflammatory skin condition' as they are now covered by factors 6(f) & 6(r) concerning 'a specified condition';
 - new definitions of 'a narrowing or obstruction of the external auditory canal', 'a specified condition', 'an immunocompromised state', 'blocking the external auditory canal', 'cumulative equivalent dose', 'other aquatic activities', 'otomycosis' and 'trauma to the external ear canal' in clause 9;
 - revising the definitions of 'chronic suppurative otitis media', 'ICD-10-AM code' and 'relevant service' in clause 9;
 - deleting the definitions of 'a course of therapeutic radiation', 'an obstruction or partial obstruction of the external auditory canal', 'immuno-compromised state' and 'specified systemic inflammatory skin condition'; and
 - specifying a date of effect for the Instrument in clause 11.

7. Further changes to the format of the Instrument reflect the commencement of the MRCA and clarify that pursuant to subsection 196B(3A) of the VEA, the Statement of Principles has been determined for the purposes of both the VEA and the MRCA.

8. Prior to determining this Instrument, the Authority advertised its intention to undertake an investigation in relation to otitis externa in the Government Notices Gazette of 30 June 2010, and circulated a copy of the notice of intention to investigate to a wide range of organisations representing veterans, service personnel and their dependants. The Authority invited submissions from the Repatriation Commission, organisations and persons referred to in section 196E of the VEA, and any person having expertise in the field. One submission was received for consideration by the Authority during the investigation.
9. This instrument is compatible with the Human Rights and Freedoms recognised or declared in the International Instruments listed in Section 3 of the *Human Rights (Parliamentary Scrutiny Act 2011)*. A Statement of Compatibility with Human Rights follows.
10. The determining of this Instrument finalises the investigation in relation to otitis externa as advertised in the Government Notices Gazette of 30 June 2010.
11. A list of references relating to the above condition is available to any person or organisation referred to in subsection 196E(1)(a) to (c) of the VEA. Any such request must be made in writing to the Repatriation Medical Authority at the following address:

The Registrar
Repatriation Medical Authority
GPO Box 1014
BRISBANE QLD 4001



Australian Government
Repatriation Medical Authority

Statement of Compatibility with Human Rights

(Prepared in accordance with Part 3 of the Human Rights (Parliamentary Scrutiny) Act 2011)

Instrument No.: **Statement of Principles No. 58 of 2012**

Kind of Injury, Disease or Death: **Otitis externa**

This Legislative Instrument is compatible with the human rights and freedoms recognised or declared in the international instruments listed in section 3 of the *Human Rights (Parliamentary Scrutiny) Act 2011*.

Overview of the Legislative Instrument

1. This Legislative Instrument is determined pursuant to subsection 196B(8) of the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986* (the VEA) for the purposes of the VEA and the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004* (the MRCA).
2. This Legislative Instrument:-
 - facilitates claimants in making, and the Repatriation Commission in assessing, claims under the VEA and the MRCA respectively, by specifying the circumstances in which medical treatment and compensation can be extended to eligible persons who have otitis externa;
 - facilitates the review of such decisions by the Veterans' Review Board and the Administrative Appeals Tribunal;
 - outlines the factors which the current sound medical-scientific evidence indicates must as a minimum exist, before it can be said that a reasonable hypothesis has been raised, connecting otitis externa with the circumstances of eligible service rendered by a person, as set out in clause 4 of the Explanatory Notes;
 - replaces Instrument No. 73 of 2001, as amended by Instrument No. 42 of 2002; and
 - reflects developments in the available sound medical-scientific evidence concerning otitis externa which have occurred since those earlier instruments were determined.

3. The Instrument is assessed as being a technical instrument which improves the medico-scientific quality of outcomes under the VEA and the MRCA.

Human Rights Implications

4. This Legislative Instrument does not derogate from any human rights. It promotes the human rights of veterans, current and former Defence Force members as well as other persons such as their dependents, including:
- the right to social security (Art 9, *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*; Art 26, *Convention on the Rights of the Child* and Art 28, *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*) by helping to ensure that the qualifying conditions for the benefit are 'reasonable, proportionate and transparent'¹;
 - the right to an adequate standard of living (Art 11, ICSECR; Art 27, CRC and Art 28, CRPD) by facilitating the assessment and determination of social security benefits;
 - the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health (Art 12, ICSECR and Art 25, CRPD), by facilitating the assessment and determination of compensation and benefits in relation to the treatment and rehabilitation of veterans and Defence Force members; and
 - the rights of persons with disabilities by facilitating the determination of claims relating to treatment and rehabilitation (Art 26, CRPD).

Conclusion

This Legislative Instrument is compatible with human rights as it does not derogate from and promotes a number of human rights.

Repatriation Medical Authority

¹ In General Comment No. 19 (The right to social security), the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights said (at paragraph 24) this to be one of the elements of ensuring accessibility to social security.