



Australian Government

Department of Veterans' Affairs

Creating a simpler, easier to use system for the veteran community

Changes from 1 July 2026



Acknowledgement of Country

The Department of Veterans' Affairs acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

We recognise and celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the First Peoples of Australia and their continuing spiritual and cultural connection to land, sea and community.

Acknowledgement of Service

We respect and give thanks to all who have served in our Defence Force and their families.

We acknowledge the unique nature of military service and the sacrifice demanded of all who commit to defend our nation.

We undertake to preserve the memory and deeds of all who have served and promise to welcome, embrace and support all military veterans as respected and valued members of our community.

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Published by the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

This document is available at www.dva.gov.au/legislationreform

P04553

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Message from the Minister

Since my very first day in this job I've been hearing the same thing from our veteran community – the veteran compensation system has been a nightmare to deal with for decades.

The Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide, in their interim report, made the same observation – the complex and difficult to navigate tri-Act system was contributing to poor physical and mental health outcomes for the veteran community – it was deemed a contributor to suicidality.

On 1 July 2026 we're banishing that nightmare to the history books, once and for all.

We're implementing a better and simpler veterans' entitlements system so that veterans and families of veterans can access the supports they need and deserve, faster.

From 1 July all new claims for compensation and rehabilitation will be assessed under one single piece of legislation—the improved *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004* – the MRCA.

It means that we will be better able to provide the services and supports the veteran community needs, and it will be easier for veterans and families of veterans to understand their entitlements and get the support they need, when they need it.

This has been years in the making, and I want to thank you all for your input along the way.

This reform, the most significant for the veteran support system in a century, was shaped in collaboration with the veteran community.

We've been consulting on what's needed and how to pull this off since 2022.

I've greatly valued the opportunity to hear frank and often fearless feedback from around the country as we drafted what was to become 'the VETS Act'—the *Veterans' Entitlements, Treatment and Support (Simplification and Harmonisation) Act 2025*.

Progressing this ambitious program of reform would not have been possible without the cooperation, contribution and united purpose demonstrated by current and former serving veterans, families, advocates, experts, and a range of ex-service organisations.



I want you to be assured that when the changes come into effect, no veteran or family member will see an interruption or reduction in payments or benefits they're currently receiving.

As these important reforms commence, we are also continuing the important work of implementing the Government's response to the final report of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide.

As a Government, we're focused on improving veteran wellbeing, and this simpler veterans' entitlement system will go a long way to progressing that today and for generations to come.

The Hon Matt Keogh MP

Minister for Veterans' Affairs
Minister for Defence Personnel

01 A single ongoing Act – the improved MRCA

From 1 July 2026 the veterans' compensation system will be easier to navigate.

The *Veterans' Entitlements, Treatment and Support (Simplification and Harmonisation) Act 2025* (VETS Act) will bring the three schemes for veterans' compensation and rehabilitation under a single Act: an improved *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004* (MRCA).

Various entitlements will be enhanced, while allowances and other payments that had operated differently across the three Acts will be standardised from 1 July.

All new claims for compensation and rehabilitation, regardless of when a veteran served, or when their injuries or diseases occurred, will be determined under the improved MRCA from 1 July onwards.

VEA and DRCA compensation claims close 30 June 2026

The *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986* (VEA) and *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-related Claims) Act 1988* (DRCA) will close to new claims for compensation and rehabilitation.

The last day to lodge a compensation claim under the VEA or DRCA is **Tuesday 30 June 2026**.

Compensation claims lodged on or after 1 July 2026 will be determined under the improved MRCA.

'Grandparenting' of existing payments from 1 July 2026

If you're already receiving a compensation payment under the VEA or DRCA it will be 'grand-parented' from 1 July 2026. This means your payment will continue uninterrupted and be indexed as normal.

Income support payments already being received before 1 July, such as the Veteran Payment, Service Pension, Partner Service Pension, and Income Support Supplement, will continue as normal.

If you are a veteran receiving Disability Compensation Payments, including above general rate payments such as the Special Rate payment (TPI) Temporary Special Rate (TTI) and Extreme Disablement Adjustment (EDA), you will also see no change to your payments or entitlements.

There is an exception for DRCA veterans receiving incapacity payments, who will have their benefits transferred to the more generous MRCA incapacity payments on 1 July 2026.

All veterans with qualifying service will continue to be eligible for the Veteran Gold Card at age 70, with treatment for existing card holders to continue unchanged.

The automatic payment of the war widow (er)'s and orphan's pension under the VEA will be retained after 1 July 2026, as well as the automatic granting of funeral benefits. Eligible dependants will continue to receive a Veteran Gold Card.

Determination of existing claims after 1 July 2026

All claims for compensation and rehabilitation received before 1 July 2026 will be determined under the tri-Act system of the VEA, DRCA and MRCA.

Only new claims for compensation received on or after 1 July 2026 will be determined under the improved MRCA.

Claims for reimbursement of costs incurred before 1 July, such as travel for treatment, will also be determined under the tri-Act system.

Only costs incurred from 1 July onwards will be eligible for reimbursement under the MRCA.

02 Improving support for veterans

Liability

Establishing initial liability is the first step in the compensation process for veterans and their families, and necessary to access DVA rehabilitation and compensation.

In the transition to the improved MRCA as the single ongoing Act from 1 July 2026, conditions which have already been accepted (under any Act) will be recognised.

This means that veterans will not have to re-establish liability or recontest existing entitlements.

Statement of Principles (SoPs)

Liability claims under the MRCA are generally determined with the use of Statement of Principles (SoPs), which contain causative “factors” linked to the development of specific medical conditions.

SoPs are based on medical-scientific evidence and are determined by the Repatriation Medical Authority (RMA), an independent statutory body comprised of a panel of five medical practitioners eminent in fields of medical science.

From 1 July 2026, all claims will be assessed using the MRCA SoP system.

Presumptive liability

From 1 July 2026 the Repatriation Commission will be able to specify injuries and diseases known to have a common connection with military service on a presumptive basis. This is known as presumptive liability.

Existing presumptive conditions and categories subject to presumptive liability under the DRCA, including compensation for Point Cook firefighters and F-111 Deseal/Reseal workers, will be carried across to the MRCA from 1 July 2026.

Other changes to liability under the improved MRCA include:

- **Medical event on duty**

The definition of service injury is changing. From 1 July 2026 an injury will be accepted on the basis that it occurred while the person was ‘on duty’ as a defence member (such as heart attacks and strokes), regardless of whether or not the injury was caused by the member’s service.

- **Accrued rights at review**

Where the Repatriation Medical Authority (RMA) updates a Statement of Principle (SoP) between the veteran’s primary and reviewable decision, the version of the SoP which is most beneficial to the veteran’s circumstances will be applied.

- **Injuries or deaths arising from treatment**

Serving members will be covered for unintended consequences of any treatment provided under Defence health arrangements, including for pre-existing conditions or preventative treatment.

- **Conditions relating to tobacco use**

Claims for conditions relating to tobacco use prior to 1 January 1998 may be accepted as service related from 1 July 2026. This will ensure that VEA and DRCA veterans are not disadvantaged in the transition to the improved MRCA as the single ongoing Act.

Incapacity compensation payments

Incapacity compensation payments are paid to eligible veterans under pension age who are unable to work due to service-related conditions and are calculated on pre-injury earnings.

From 1 July 2026 all veterans will be able to make claims for incapacity compensation payments for already accepted conditions, or a newly accepted condition under the MRCA criteria.

DRCA veterans already receiving incapacity payments will automatically transition to the more beneficial MRCA incapacity payments from 1 July 2026. Payments under the MRCA include a remuneration loading and have no notional reduction for superannuation contributions.

Permanent Impairment compensation

From 1 July 2026 all eligible veterans will be able to make a claim for MRCA permanent impairment (PI) compensation, including claims for worsening of existing VEA or DRCA accepted conditions. For VEA veterans this will replace the Application for Increase (AFI) process.

The transition to the improved MRCA as the single ongoing Act will also see a number of beneficial changes to PI compensation from 1 July 2026:

- **'Date of effect'**

This will allow treating doctors to provide a meaningful estimate of when an impairment met the criteria of being permanent and stable for payment to commence.

- **MRCA section 80 (s.80) additional compensation for the children of severely injured veterans**

In changes from 1 July 2026 the amount can be paid either to the impaired veteran or to the primary carer (or appropriately apportioned where primary caring arrangements are shared) of the eligible young person or child.

- **Posthumous PI payment**

Providing an option to convert weekly payments into a lump sum where claims were outstanding at the time of a veteran's death.

- **Financial advice**

The Repatriation Commission will be able to determine circumstances where a vulnerable veteran must receive financial advice before receiving a lump sum PI payment.

- **Guide to Determining Impairment and Compensation 2016 (GARP M)**

The GARP M will be amended to facilitate the translation of previous impairment rating determinations made under the VEA and DRCA into a baseline impairment rating under the improved MRCA. The permanent impairment assessment will consider worsening to be an increase from the assessed baseline.



Special Rate Disability Pension (SRDP)

The Special Rate Disability Pension (SRDP) is a periodic payment granted to veterans under pension age whose capacity for work is severely restricted because of accepted service related conditions.

Eligible veterans can elect to receive the SRDP instead of MRCA incapacity payments.

Veterans who are eligible for the SRDP automatically receive a Veteran Gold Card.

Veterans can be assessed for SRDP if they are eligible to receive MRCA incapacity benefits and have been assessed at 50 or more impairment points under the MRCA.

Confirmation from treating medical specialists that the veteran is unable to work more than 10 hours a week, with rehabilitation unlikely to improve their ability to work, is also required. Partners of veterans who were eligible for the SRDP at the time of their death and who meet the MRCA criteria of 'Wholly Dependent Partner' will be entitled to compensation, including a Veteran Gold Card.

The children of deceased SRDP veterans will also receive an eligible young person payment (if applicable) and access to the MRCA education scheme as well as a Veteran Gold Card (providing the MRCA eligibility criteria is met).

Additional Disablement Amount (ADA)

The Additional Disablement Amount (ADA) is a new payment being introduced from 1 July 2026.

It is similar to the Extreme Disablement Adjustment (EDA) benefit available under the VEA.

It is intended as a 'safety net' for veterans who are over age pension age and who have a high degree of impairment due to service-caused injuries or illness.

Veterans who are eligible for the ADA will receive a Veteran Gold Card.

Partners of veterans who were eligible for the ADA at the time of their death and who meet the MRCA criteria of 'Wholly Dependent Partner' will be entitled to compensation, and a Veteran Gold Card.

The children of deceased ADA veterans will also receive an eligible young person payment (if applicable) and access to the MRCA education scheme as well as a Veteran Gold Card.



Veteran Gold Card

MRCA veterans with high levels of impairment may become eligible for the treatment of any injury or disease via the Veteran Gold Card for the first time from 1 July 2026.

This includes all National Servicemen (Nashos), including those who rendered part-time service in the Citizen Military Forces (CMF) and veterans with previous coverage under the 1971 and 1930 Act.

This will require a five-point worsening of their overall impairment level or a new condition accepted under the MRCA on or after 1 July 2026 and more than 60 impairment points overall.

Veterans who are eligible for ADA or SRDP payments will also receive a Veteran Gold Card.

Travel for treatment

All eligible treatment card holders will be able to claim the MRCA rate of \$0.68 a kilometre for trips taken from 1 July when a private vehicle is used to travel for approved treatment.

This is higher than the \$0.44 payable under the VEA.

VEA veterans will also become eligible for the reimbursement of reasonable travel costs under the MRCA from 1 July 2026. This will replace the payment of an allowance under the VEA.

The 50km limit under the MRCA will also be removed for trips taken from 1 July 2026, meaning more veterans can be reimbursed for the cost of travelling for treatment.

Rehabilitation

DVA rehabilitation can help you to understand and learn to utilise the civilian health system and overcome barriers that may be impacting on your wellbeing. If you are able to work, it can also help you to obtain or sustain suitable employment.

Rehabilitation needs are considered as part of the needs assessment conducted when a new liability claim is accepted under the MRCA. This assessment identifies the types of compensation, rehabilitation, and other assistance a veteran may need.

Transition of open rehabilitation plans

From 1 July 2026 veterans with open VEA and DRCA rehabilitation plans will automatically transition to the MRCA rehabilitation scheme.

As there are no differences between DRCA and MRCA rehabilitation this will mean no change for DRCA veterans.

In the transition to a single ongoing Act the VEA Veterans' Vocational Rehabilitation Scheme (VVRS) will close. VEA veterans with open VVRS plans from before 1 July 2026 will be transitioned to MRCA rehabilitation, with no action by the veteran required.

This will potentially provide eligible VEA veterans with access to a broader range of rehabilitation opportunities, as the MRCA Rehabilitation program includes support for medical management and psychosocial services as well as vocational support.

DVA will also review VVRS plans to identify any additional rehabilitation activities that may be of benefit. There will be no reduction in VVRS participants' existing rehabilitation supports, and VVRS safety net provisions will continue without interruption.

Motor Vehicle Assistance

In the transition to a single ongoing Act the Vehicle Assistance Scheme (VAS) under the VEA will close to new claims from 30 June 2026.

From 1 July 2026 veterans can continue to receive support from the VAS or choose to make a new claim under the MRCA Motor Vehicle Compensation Scheme (MVCS).

Household Services and Attendant Care

DVA offers a number of services to help veterans who need help at home. These include domestic assistance in and around the home, as well as support to manage personal care tasks.

VEA veterans having difficulties managing domestic or personal care tasks due to service-related conditions will become eligible to apply for compensation for Household Services and/or Attendant Care for the first time from 1 July 2026.

This compensation was previously not available for conditions accepted under the VEA.

For DRCA veterans already receiving compensation for Household Services and/or Attendant Care there will be no interruption to approved services after 1 July 2026.

At the end of the approval period specified in the veteran's determination letter these services will be reviewed under the MRCA .

DRCA veterans who have reached the maximum level of compensation for these services, and whose needs and circumstances have not changed, can contact DVA after 1 July 2026 to discuss transition to the higher MRCA statutory rate before the end of their approval period.

From 1 July 2026 MRCA and DRCA veterans with service-related conditions accepted under the VEA, who are already receiving compensation for Household Services and/or Attendant Care, can ask for a reassessment to consider the impact of these conditions on their ability to carry out domestic tasks and personal care.

Unlike the Veterans' Home Care program (VHC), compensation for Household Services and Attendant Care is only available to veterans.

All eligible Gold and White Veteran Card holders can continue to apply for assistance through the VHC from 1 July 2026. This service will continue unchanged.

Current rules around dual access to compensation for Household Services and/or Attendant Care and support through the Veterans' Home Care Program will continue.

Streamlining governance

Merging Commissions

As part of the harmonisation of the veterans' entitlement system from 1 July 2026 the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission (MRCC) will merge into the Repatriation Commission, creating a single body to administer the granting of pensions, allowances and other benefits under veterans' legislation. This will remove duplication and provide greater administrative clarity about governance matters. This will have no effect on outstanding matters before the MRCC.



Single review pathway

In a first step towards the harmonisation of veterans' entitlements, a single review pathway across the three Acts commenced on 21 April 2025.

The first level of external merits review for all compensation claim decisions made under the DRCA from 21 April 2025 is now through the Veterans' Review Board (VRB), rather than the Administrative Review Tribunal (ART).

This is allowing DRCA veterans to follow the same appeal path as VEA and MRCA veterans.

The VRB is a more veteran-friendly, less adversarial setting than the ART. VRB decisions can continue to be appealed at the ART.

03 Support for families of veterans

Education assistance

Through its support for education, DVA provides eligible dependants with financial assistance and student support services, and can arrange for guidance and counselling to help them achieve their highest potential in full-time education or career training.

As part of the transition to a single ongoing Act there will be only one education scheme from 1 July 2026.

The Veterans' Children Education Scheme (VCES), established under the VEA, will close. Students receiving support through the VCES will automatically transition to the MRCA education scheme without the need to reapply.

While the benefits provided under each scheme are mostly the same, eligibility rules differ slightly under the VEA and MRCA legislation.

From 1 July 2026 the children of severely impaired MRCA veterans will become eligible to apply for the DVA education scheme under the MRCA for the first time.

Compensation following the death of a veteran

From 1 July 2026 all claims for compensation from the dependants of veterans will be determined under the MRCA.

This includes claims made on or after 1 July where a veteran died before 1 July 2026.

New claims from widow(er)s from 1 July 2026 will be assessed against the MRCA criteria for 'Wholly Dependent Partner'.

Partners of veterans who were eligible for the ADA or SRDP at the time of their death and who meet the MRCA criteria of 'Wholly Dependent Partner' will be entitled to compensation, including a Veteran Gold Card.

The children of deceased ADA or SRDP veterans will also receive an eligible young person payment (if applicable) as well as access to the MRCA education scheme and a Veteran Gold Card (providing the MRCA eligibility criteria is met).

No additional compensation will be paid where claims have been settled and benefits received before 1 July 2026.

VEA war widow (ers)'s and orphan's pension

The automatic granting of a war widow (er)'s pension and orphan's pension under the VEA will not change from 1 July 2026.

VEA dependants eligible for these payments can also choose to lodge a new claim for compensation under the MRCA where the death of a veteran occurs after 1 July 2026.

Disability Compensation Payment

Where a Disability Compensation Payment is being received it will be paid up to the date of a veteran's death, not the end of the fortnightly pay period, after 1 July 2026.

Funeral costs and compensation payments

All new dependant claims made from 1 July 2026 will be assessed against the MRCA criteria for 'Wholly Dependent Partner', with eligible recipients able to receive MRCA benefits from 1 July 2026.

This includes the flexibility to convert all or part of weekly tax-free PI compensation payments into an age-based lump sum (where a claim was received but the veteran had not made a choice at the time of their death).

Additional lump sum compensation may also be payable where a veteran's death is service-related and occurs after 1 July 2026. Eligible partners may also receive a Veteran Gold Card for life.

Funeral expenses for all service-related deaths occurring on or after 1 July 2026 will be reimbursed up to a combined maximum cap of \$14,990 (indexed).

The automatic granting of funeral compensation for eligible VEA veterans, will be retained and increased from \$2,000 to \$3,000 (fixed).

Dependants of veterans who were ADA or SRDP eligible and assessed at 80 or more PI points will also be entitled to 12 weeks of bereavement payments.

This will allow the partners of DRCA veterans to be eligible for these benefits for the first time.

Claims for compensation following the death of a veteran received before 1 July 2026 will be determined under the tri-Act system of the VEA, DRCA and MRCA. This includes claims that have not been determined by that date.

04 Resources

For more information on the changes from 1 July

A range of resources are available to help you understand the single Act system from 1 July 2026.

This includes:

- more than **20 factsheets** that provide information on specific topics and summaries of the impact for **particular groups**
- **frequently asked questions**
- **scenarios** that demonstrate how the improved MRCA may impact your individual circumstances.

For more information visit: www.dva.gov.au/legislationreform

Help with making a claim

Navigating the claims process can be complex.

DVA is committed to helping veterans and families make informed decisions, with access to free, qualified support through trusted organisations.

Whether choosing to lodge your own claim or using a professional trained advocate, DVA is here to empower you with clear information and access to trusted support.

You can:

- Use MyService to lodge your claim
- Request an online or in person meeting with a Claims Lodgement Assistant
- Request a 1-1 appointment with a Veteran Support Officer
- Visit a DVA office or VAN location in your state or territory
- Find a free, trained and qualified advocate near you via the DVA **Advocacy Register** at www.advocaterregister.org.au/

The Making a Claim guide is available on DVA's website at www.dva.gov.au/claimguide

For more information call **1800 VETERAN** (1800 838 372) or email primary.claims@dva.gov.au

Keep up to date with DVA

DVA website The DVA website (www.dva.gov.au) is the best way of accessing in-depth information on the Department and the services we offer.

Latest News Articles on services and supports are frequently published on the Latest News page (www.dva.gov.au/latest-news)

e-news DVA *e-news* is a monthly round-up of news articles published on the Latest News page of the DVA website.

Vetaffairs Vetaffairs is DVA's official newspaper for Australia's veteran community, published three times a year, in print and online.

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You can also find us on LinkedIn by searching for 'Australian Government Department of Veterans' Affairs.

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Translations

If you require translation services, please contact the Translation and Interpreting Service (www.tisnational.gov.au/en) on 131 450. It's a free service. Just provide our name (DVA), the 1800 VETERAN phone number (1800 838 372) and your DVA file number, if you have one.

Support Services

Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling

A national service that provides free mental health and wellbeing support to anyone who has served at least one day of continuous fulltime service in the ADF and their immediate families. Open Arms is available 24/7.

1800 011 046 | www.OpenArms.gov.au

1800 VETERAN

DVA's primary contact number for veterans and their families.

1800 838 372 | www.dva.gov.au

Safe Zone Support

A free and anonymous counselling line for all current and ex-serving ADF personnel, veterans and their families. Safe Zone is hosted by Open Arms but is a separate service, available 24/7.

1800 142 072 | www.OpenArms.gov.au/safe-zone

Lifeline Australia

Provides free support services if you are in crisis and need to talk to someone.

13 11 14 | www.lifeline.org.au

1800 RESPECT

Provides 24-hour counselling services to help you cope with sexual assault or violence.

1800 737 732 | Text 0458 737 732

Head to Health

Head to Health provides resources and links to a variety of websites and apps to support veteran mental health and wellbeing

1800 595 212 | www.headtohealth.gov.au

Ex-service organisations

Connect with an Ex-service organisation in your local area. These organisations may be able to provide you with support and resources.

www.dva.gov.au/eso

Relationships Australia

Offers a broad range of services to individuals, families and communities across the country such as counselling, mediation, and family dispute resolution.

1300 364 277 | www.relationships.org.au



