



Australian Government
Repatriation Medical Authority

REPATRIATION MEDICAL AUTHORITY

INSTRUMENT NO. 2 of 2014

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. 4 of 2006, determined under subsection 196B(3) of the VEA concerning **heart block**.
2. The Authority is of the view that on the sound medical-scientific evidence available it is more probable than not that **heart block** and **death from heart block** can be related to particular kinds of service. The Authority has therefore determined pursuant to subsection 196B(3) of the VEA a Statement of Principles, Instrument No. 2 of 2014 concerning heart block. This Instrument will in effect replace the revoked Statement 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 exist, and which of those factors must be related to the following kinds of service rendered by a person:
 - eligible war service (other than operational service) under the VEA;
 - defence service (other than hazardous service and British nuclear test defence service) under the VEA;
 - peacetime service under the MRCA,

before it can be said that, on the balance of probabilities, heart block or death from heart block is connected with the circumstances of that service.

5. This Instrument results from an investigation notified by the Authority in the Government Notices Gazette of 18 May 2011 concerning heart block 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 Instrument. Comparing this Instrument and the revoked Instrument, the differences include:

- revising the definition of 'heart block' in clause 3;
- revising factor 6(b) concerning 'infiltration of the myocardium';
- new factors 6(d) & 6(x) concerning 'ischaemic heart disease';
- revising factor 6(i) concerning 'a drug or a drug from a class of drugs';
- revising factor 6(l) concerning 'a heart transplant';
- revising factor 6(n) concerning 'a powerful, non-penetrating blow to the chest';
- new factors 6(o) & 6(ii) concerning 'ionising radiation';
- revising factor 6(p) concerning 'a course of therapeutic radiation';
- revising factor 6(q) concerning 'strenuous, high level, endurance physical activity';
- new factors 6(t) & 6 (nn) concerning 'hypertension';
- new factor 6(u) concerning 'a specified autoimmune disease', for clinical worsening;
- new factor 6(v) concerning 'infiltration of the myocardium', for clinical worsening;
- new factor 6(w) concerning 'a primary or metastatic neoplasm involving the heart', for clinical worsening;
- new factor 6(y) concerning 'myocarditis', for clinical worsening;
- new factor 6(z) concerning 'an infection of the myocardium', for clinical worsening;
- new factor 6(aa) concerning 'infective endocarditis', for clinical worsening;
- new factor 6(bb) concerning 'a specified mineral or electrolyte abnormality', for clinical worsening;
- new factor 6(cc) concerning 'a drug or a drug from a class of drugs', for clinical worsening;
- new factor 6(dd) concerning 'chloroquine sulphate, chloroquine phosphate or hydroxychloroquine', for clinical worsening;
- new factor 6(ee) concerning 'penetrating trauma to the heart', for clinical worsening;
- new factor 6(ff) concerning 'a heart transplant', for clinical worsening;
- new factor 6(gg) concerning 'a bone marrow transplant', for clinical worsening;
- new factor 6(hh) concerning 'a powerful, non-penetrating blow to the chest', for clinical worsening;
- new factor 6(jj) concerning 'a course of therapeutic radiation', for clinical worsening;
- new factor 6(kk) concerning 'strenuous, high level, endurance physical activity', for clinical worsening;
- new factor 6(ll) concerning 'being envenomated by a scorpion or snake', for clinical worsening;
- new factor 6(mm) concerning 'diabetes mellitus', for clinical worsening;

- deleting the factors concerning 'myocardial infarction' and 'variant angina' as they are now covered by factor 6(d) concerning 'ischaemic heart disease';
 - deleting the factor concerning 'being treated with a drug in Specified List 2' as it is now covered by factor 6(i) concerning 'a drug or a drug from a class of drugs';
 - new definitions of 'a drug or a drug from a class of drugs from the specified list' and 'cumulative equivalent dose' in clause 9;
 - revising the definitions of 'a specified autoimmune disease', 'an organism from the specified list', 'ICD-10-AM code' and 'relevant service' in clause 9;
 - deleting the definitions of 'a course of therapeutic radiation', 'a drug from a class of drug in Specified List 1', 'a drug in Specified List 2' and 'variant angina'; 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 heart block in the Government Notices Gazette of 18 May 2011, 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. No submissions were 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 heart block as advertised in the Government Notices Gazette of 18 May 2011.
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. 2 of 2014**

Kind of Injury, Disease or Death: **Heart block**

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 heart block;
 - 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 exist before it can be said that, on the balance of probabilities, heart block is connected with the circumstances of eligible service rendered by a person, as set out in clause 4 of the Explanatory Notes;
 - replaces Instrument No. 4 of 2006; and
 - reflects developments in the available sound medical-scientific evidence concerning heart block which have occurred since that earlier instrument was 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.