



# Australian Veteran Health Services

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## NAVIGATING HEALTHCARE FOR OUR VETERANS

*DVA Claims*

*Permanent Impairment Assessments*

*ADF Transition Medicals*

*CASA and FAA Pilot Medicals*

Hello,

Thank-you for choosing Australian Veteran Health Services.

We are a specialised practice that is run by Veterans for Veterans.

As a practice we generally help Veterans with 3 things:

1. Helping to prepare and lodge DVA claims (the most common reason people use our service)
2. Permanent impairment assessments – once DVA has accepted liability for a condition these assessments are used to assess the % impairment and potential compensation.
3. Helping Serving member transition from Military Medical to the Civilian Medical environment.

### ■ ■ ■ CLAIMS

The claims process is relatively simple. You provide us with a copy of your medical records – either on USB or uploaded via google drive. One of our Doctors will do a full chart review and identify all of the medical problems you have had during your service. Some of these conditions will be claimable through DVA and some will not. It is our job to figure out what is what for you.

Depending on the time you have been in the ADF will determine which Act you are covered by. There are 3 Acts: MRCA (Jul 2004 onwards), DRCA (service up to Jun 2004) and VEA.

Under the current Act MRCA (and VEA) there are pieces of legislation called SOPs (Statements of Principle) that cover the most common conditions. They state that if you have the specific condition, meet one of the listed factors for causing or worsening the condition, and it is related to your service they will accept liability. The SOPs are not legally binding for DRCA but are often used as a guide so therefore still relevant.

Linking the condition or injury to your service is often the hardest part. We need to be able to convince the DVA delegate of this before they will accept liability. The link to your service is often not clear – Defence do not care how you suffered an injury because they provide all your healthcare whilst in service regardless of whether it was service related or not.

An example would be if you sprained your ankle – your medical notes might read “Member sprained left ankle yesterday, Diagnosis: soft tissue injury, Refer to Physio, Treated with Ibuprofen and restrictions”. Unlike Defence, DVA are similar to an insurance company – they are accepting liability for that injury and committing to paying for your medical treatment for this indefinitely, as well as potential compensation for any impairment arising from it. They want to make sure that what they are paying for is related to your service. The ankle sprain could have happened during Unit PT, Defence approved sport, workplace accident, or whilst on exercise or deployment – in which case DVA will accept this as service related. If the ankle sprain occurred when you tripped and fell in your backyard on the weekend off duty they will say not service related and most likely reject the initial liability claim.

***DVA CLAIMS & OTHER SERVICES FREE OF CHARGE  
NO COST TO VETERANS - Except CASA/FAA Pilot Medicals***



We need to get more information about the circumstances leading to the injury to complete the claim paperwork. To get this context we send you 2 pieces of paperwork at the completion of the intake. The more information you give us the better – this will make it easier for us to produce your claims and make it more likely DVA will approve the claims.

- The first is a “Service history” which is your chance to tell us who you are and what you have done in defence. 2 people in the same role might have completely different journeys – having details about what roles and tasks you performed is very useful for our claims team to assess the SOP factors for each claim. We will use what you provide as a summary at the start of each claim (remember the DVA delegate who is making the decision on your claims doesn’t know you or what you have done).
- The second is a statement of contention checklist of common joints problems / conditions – if you indicate you have had an “ankle injury” we will ask you to provide some basic details (how, where, when and why you think it is linked to your service). When the team is reviewing your claims they will use this to check against what is in your medical records. If for some reason there is no mention of your ankle injury in your medical records it will trigger us to find out why (either you didn’t present to medical and self-managed it, medical may not have documented it or if handwritten notes they might not be legible etc).
- If it is still not clear we may contact you to get more history / information.

Once we have completed the claims we think are relevant we will send the information back to you with instructions on how to upload them to MyGov / MyServices – there will be a diagnosis form, an initial liability claim report and the supporting documents for each condition. If you have an Advocate you can forward this on to them and they can upload it on your behalf on a different portal.



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## ■ ■ ■ Permanent Impairment Assessments (PIA)

Once DVA has accepted liability for your medical conditions that are caused by your military service, you may require a Permanent Impairment Assessment (PIA). This is the process whereby your medical condition is apportioned against impairment tables to determine your eligibility for compensation and other benefits including a DVA Gold Card. The PIA process involves asking questions about your accepted conditions, and then measuring your joint movements and assessing other body parts as required.

At the moment, you can get a PIA completed in one of two ways. DVA will offer one of their doctors to perform the PIA for you. Alternatively, you can nominate an AVHS doctor to do your PIA for you. This is noting that the DVA doctors work for DVA, and the AVHS doctors work for their Veterans. AVHS has a dedicated team who complete PIAs on a daily basis and liaise with all of the DVA Delegates to ensure a smooth PIA process and that our Veterans' best interests are paramount.

## ■ ■ ■ Transitioning from ADF

The transition from Military to Civilian medical life can be difficult and I believe is usually not handled well by Defence or DVA. We would like to start the process 1-2 months prior to separating and would aim to make the transition as smooth as possible. We would normally discuss:

- Private Health Insurance versus Public Health
- Ensure DVA claims are being sorted.
- Ensure that any referrals (Specialist and Allied Health) are generated – a lot of people don't realise that even if you keep seeing the same provider the referral from Defence / BUPA is not valid from the day of your separation. A new referral for DVA or Medicare is required.
- At this time we do not provide General Practice services but help with managing your DVA / Chronic medical problems until a Veteran can find and engage with a Civilian GP. We are developing a list of GPs who have some previous Defence experience and can provide this if required.

We currently provided outreach clinics to Townsville and Canberra on a monthly basis and hope to expand to other locations in the future.

All of the above services are provided at no expense to the Veterans.

Again thank-you for engaging AVHS to help with your DVA matters.

Thank-you for your service.

Kind Regards,  
Dr. Steven Smith  
MBBS, FRACGP

***Dr Steven Smith - ADF Civilian Contracted Medical Officer (Ex)***

***Dr Harsharan Singh - Flight Lieutenant (SERCAT5)***

***Dr Andrew Cronin - Flight Lieutenant (Retd)***



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