



Australian Government
Repatriation Medical Authority

Statement of Principles
concerning
MELIOIDOSIS
(Reasonable Hypothesis)
(No. 55 of 2023)

The Repatriation Medical Authority determines the following Statement of Principles under subsection 196B(2) of the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986*.

Dated 24 April 2023.

The Common Seal of the
Repatriation Medical Authority
was affixed to this instrument
at the direction of:

Professor Terence Campbell AM
Chairperson

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1 Name

This is the Statement of Principles concerning *melioidosis (Reasonable Hypothesis)* (No. 55 of 2023).

2 Commencement

This instrument commences on 23 May 2023.

3 Authority

This instrument is made under subsection 196B(2) of the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986*.

4 Repeal

The Statement of Principles concerning melioidosis No. 60 of 2014 (Federal Register of Legislation No. F2014L00940) made under subsection 196B(2) of the VEA is repealed.

5 Application

This instrument applies to a claim to which section 120A of the VEA or section 338 of the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004* applies.

6 Definitions

The terms defined in the Schedule 1 - Dictionary have the meaning given when used in this instrument.

7 Kind of injury, disease or death to which this Statement of Principles relates

- (1) This Statement of Principles is about melioidosis and death from melioidosis.

Meaning of melioidosis

- (2) For the purposes of this Statement of Principles, melioidosis means an illness caused by infection with the bacterium *Burkholderia pseudomallei*.

Note: Melioidosis may present as an acute, chronic or latent infection. Clinical manifestations may be local or systemic, and include pulmonary infection, septicaemia, meningoenzephalitis and chronic suppurative infection.

- (3) While melioidosis attracts ICD-10-AM codes A24.1, A24.2, A24.3 or A24.4, in applying this Statement of Principles the meaning of melioidosis is that given in subsection (2).
- (4) For subsection (3), a reference to an ICD-10-AM code is a reference to the code assigned to a particular kind of injury or disease in *The International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health*

Problems, Tenth Revision, Australian Modification (ICD-10-AM), Tenth Edition, effective date of 1 July 2017, copyrighted by the Independent Hospital Pricing Authority, ISBN 978-1-76007-296-4.

Death from melioidosis

- (5) For the purposes of this Statement of Principles, melioidosis, in relation to a person, includes death from a terminal event or condition that was contributed to by the person's melioidosis.

Note: *terminal event* is defined in the Schedule 1 – Dictionary.

8 Basis for determining the factors

The Repatriation Medical Authority is of the view that there is sound medical-scientific evidence that indicates that melioidosis and death from melioidosis can be related to relevant service rendered by veterans, members of Peacekeeping Forces, or members of the Forces under the VEA, or members under the MRCA.

Note: *MRCA*, *relevant service* and *VEA* are defined in the Schedule 1 – Dictionary.

9 Factors that must exist

At least one of the following factors must as a minimum exist before it can be said that a reasonable hypothesis has been raised connecting melioidosis or death from melioidosis with the circumstances of a person's relevant service:

- (1) being exposed to *Burkholderia pseudomallei* before the clinical onset of melioidosis;

Note: *being exposed to Burkholderia pseudomallei* is defined in the Schedule 1 – Dictionary.

- (2) being in an immunocompromised state as specified at the time of the clinical onset of melioidosis;

Note: *immunocompromised state as specified* is defined in the Schedule 1 - Dictionary.

- (3) having a medical condition from the specified list of medical conditions at the time of the clinical onset of melioidosis;

Note: *specified list of medical conditions* is defined in the Schedule 1 – Dictionary.

- (4) for males, having consumed at least 44 kilograms of alcohol within the 3 years before the clinical onset of melioidosis;

Note: Alcohol is measured by the alcohol consumption calculations utilising the Australian Standard of ten grams of alcohol per standard alcoholic drink.

- (5) for females, having consumed at least 30 kilograms of alcohol within the 3 years before the clinical onset of melioidosis;

Note: Alcohol is measured by the alcohol consumption calculations utilising the Australian Standard of ten grams of alcohol per standard alcoholic drink.

- (6) having alcohol use disorder at the time of the clinical onset of melioidosis;
- (7) inability to obtain appropriate clinical management for melioidosis.

10 Relationship to service

- (1) The existence in a person of any factor referred to in section 9, must be related to the relevant service rendered by the person.
- (2) The factor set out in subsection 9(7) applies only to material contribution to, or aggravation of, melioidosis where the person's melioidosis was suffered or contracted before or during (but did not arise out of) the person's relevant service.

11 Factors referring to an injury or disease covered by another Statement of Principles

In this Statement of Principles:

- (1) if a factor referred to in section 9 applies in relation to a person; and
- (2) that factor refers to an injury or disease in respect of which a Statement of Principles has been determined under subsection 196B(2) of the VEA;

then the factors in that Statement of Principles apply in accordance with the terms of that Statement of Principles as in force from time to time.

Schedule 1 - Dictionary

Note: See Section 6

1 Definitions

In this instrument:

albuminuria means an albumin to creatinine ratio of at least 3 mg/mmol.

being exposed to *Burkholderia pseudomallei* means:

- (a) consuming water or food contaminated with *Burkholderia pseudomallei*;
- (b) having direct contact of the skin or mucous membranes with:
 - (i) a fluid contaminated with *Burkholderia pseudomallei*;
 - (ii) blood, body fluid or tissue from an animal or person infected with *Burkholderia pseudomallei*; or
 - (iii) water or soil contaminated with *Burkholderia pseudomallei*;
- (c) inhaling dust, water or an aerosol contaminated with *Burkholderia pseudomallei*; or
- (d) undergoing a medical procedure involving an object contaminated with *Burkholderia pseudomallei*.

Note: **direct contact** is defined in Schedule 1 – Dictionary.

chronic kidney disease means:

- (a) having a glomerular filtration rate of less than 60 mL/min/1.73 m² for at least 3 months;
- (b) having albuminuria for at least 3 months;
- (c) having kidney damage, as evidenced by renal biopsy, imaging studies, urinary sediment abnormalities or other markers of abnormal renal function; or
- (d) having had a kidney transplant.

Note: **albuminuria** is also defined in the Schedule 1 - Dictionary.

chronic renal failure means:

- (a) having a glomerular filtration rate of less than 15 mL/min/1.73 m² for a period of at least 3 months;
- (b) a need for renal replacement therapy (dialysis or transplantation) for treatment of complications of decreased glomerular filtration rate which would otherwise increase the risk of morbidity and mortality; or
- (c) undergoing chronic dialysis.

direct contact means physical contact where no protective or impermeable barrier is used.

immunocompromised state as specified means a condition of substantially lowered immune function, such as would occur in the following conditions or circumstances:

- (a) having a haematological or solid organ malignancy;
- (b) having chronic renal failure;
- (c) having severe malnutrition;
- (d) taking an immunosuppressive drug; or
- (e) undergoing solid organ, stem cell or bone marrow transplantation.

Note: *chronic renal failure* and *immunosuppressive drug* are also defined in the Schedule 1 - Dictionary.

immunosuppressive drug means a drug or an agent which results in substantial suppression of immune responses.

Note: Examples of an immunosuppressive drug include:

- (a) chemotherapeutic agents used for the treatment of cancer;
- (b) corticosteroids, other than inhaled or topical corticosteroids;
- (c) drugs used to prevent transplant rejection; and
- (d) tumour necrosis factor- α inhibitors.

melioidosis—see subsection 7(2).

MRCA means the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004*.

relevant service means:

- (a) operational service under the VEA;
- (b) peacekeeping service under the VEA;
- (c) hazardous service under the VEA;
- (d) British nuclear test defence service under the VEA;
- (e) warlike service under the MRCA; or
- (f) non-warlike service under the MRCA.

Note: *MRCA* and *VEA* are also defined in the Schedule 1 - Dictionary.

specified list of medical conditions means:

- (a) chronic kidney disease;
- (b) chronic lung disease including bronchiectasis and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease;
- (c) cirrhosis of the liver;
- (d) diabetes mellitus;
- (e) heart failure; or
- (f) rheumatic heart disease.

Note: *chronic kidney disease* is also defined in the Schedule 1 – Dictionary.

terminal event means the proximate or ultimate cause of death and includes the following:

- (a) pneumonia;
- (b) respiratory failure;
- (c) cardiac arrest;
- (d) circulatory failure; or
- (e) cessation of brain function.

VEA means the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986*.