

# Statement of Principles

concerning

## **DENTAL CARIES**

**ICD CODE: 521.0**

Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986  
subsection 196B(2)

1. Being of the view that there is sound medical-scientific evidence that indicates that **dental caries** and **death from dental caries** can be related to operational service rendered by veterans, peacekeeping service rendered by members of Peacekeeping Forces and hazardous service rendered by members of the Forces, the Repatriation Medical Authority determines, under subsection 196B(2) of the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986* (the Act), that the factors that must as a minimum exist before it can be said that a reasonable hypothesis has been raised connecting **dental caries** or **death from dental caries** with the circumstances of that service, are:
  - (a) being a prisoner of war; or
  - (b) consuming only fluoride-free drinking-water in the absence of fluoride supplementation for a continuous period of at least two years within the five years immediately before the clinical onset of dental caries; or
  - (c) suffering extreme or catastrophic hyposalivation as a result of therapeutic radiation to the mouth area before the clinical onset of dental caries; or

- (d) inability to maintain oral hygiene whilst consuming a diet containing fermentable dietary carbohydrates for a continuous period of at least 90 days within the one year immediately before the clinical onset of dental caries; or
  - (e) inability to obtain appropriate clinical management for the dental caries.
2. Subject to clause 3 (below) at least one of the factors set out in paragraphs **1(a) to 1(e)** must be related to any service rendered by a person.
  3. The factor set out in paragraph **1(e)** applies only where:
    - (a) the person's **dental caries** was suffered before a period, or part of a period, of service to which the factor is related; and
    - (b) the relationship suggested between the **dental caries** and the particular service of a person is a relationship set out in paragraph 8(1)(e), 9(1)(e), 70(5)(d) or 70(5A)(d) of the Act.
  4. For the purposes of this Statement of Principles:

**“consuming only fluoride-free drinking-water”** means drinking distilled or rain water only, and excludes the consumption of drinking-water from any other source;

**“dental caries”** means localised destruction of calcified tissue initiated on the tooth surface by decalcification of the enamel of the teeth, followed by enzymatic lysis of organic structures, leading to cavity formation which may penetrate the enamel and dentine to reach the pulp of the tooth, attracting ICD code 521.0;

**“extreme or catastrophic hyposalivation”** means almost total elimination of salivary gland activity, attracting ICD code 527.7;

**“fermentable dietary carbohydrates”** means foods containing the added sugars sucrose, fructose, galactose or glucose which can be converted by oral bacteria, through a fermentation process, to acids which are destructive to tooth tissue;

**“fluoride supplementation”** means the supply of fluoride for oral consumption in liquid or tablet form;

**“ICD code”** means a number assigned to a particular kind of injury or disease in the Australian Version of The International Classification of Diseases, 9th revision, Clinical Modification (ICD-9-CM), effective date

