



**Australian Government**  

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**Repatriation Medical Authority**

## **Background**

The 1992 Auditor-General's report on the Compensation aspects of the Department of Veterans' Affairs, the High Court case of Bushell, and the inquiry by the Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs all prompted a move towards a formal review of the compensation program. The Veterans' Compensation Review Committee, chaired by Professor Peter Baume, took evidence from the veteran community and issued a report, "A Fair Go" in March 1994.

The Repatriation Medical Authority (the Authority) arose from the recommendation of the Baume Committee that an expert medical committee be formed. The aim being the provision of a more equitable and consistent system of determining claims for disability pensions from veterans and their dependants.

The Government announced the establishment of the Authority in the 1994-95 Federal Budget. The *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986* was amended to reflect this on 30 June 1994.

## **What is the Authority?**

The Authority is comprised of five eminent medical practitioners and medical scientists appointed by the Minister for Veterans' Affairs. It was created by Parliament, and is an independent statutory authority, separate from the Repatriation Commission, the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission, and the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

The role of the Authority is to prepare Statements of Principles (SOPs) in accordance with the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986* and the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004*. These SOPs are determinations by the Authority which set out the factors that must, or must as a minimum exist to establish a causal connection for particular diseases, injuries or death with the circumstances of service.

In accordance with the legislation, SOPs are determined at two distinct standards of proof:

- the 'reasonable hypothesis' standard (s196B(2)); and the
- 'reasonable satisfaction' (or 'balance of probabilities') standard (s196B(3)).

The matters of fact in relation to a particular veteran's case, including the nature of service and any connection of the SOP factors that may contribute to a disease with the veteran's service, are still determined by the various decision makers. Those decision makers include the Veterans' Review Board (VRB) and the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT).

The Authority must determine SOPs based on sound medical-scientific evidence that indicates that the identified factors are indeed causally related to the diseases or injury.

## Authority Membership

The membership of the Authority is limited to five members appointed by the Minister on a part-time basis. The current membership is as follows:

**Professor Ken Donald** AO, MBBS QLD 1962, PhD, FRCPA, FRCPPath, FRACMA, FRACS, formerly Head of the School of Medicine, University of Queensland (2000-2006) and Professor of Social & Preventive Medicine, and Head of the Department of Social & Preventive Medicine, University of Queensland (1992-2000).

Professor Donald was recently appointed as Assistant Commissioner (Medical), Queensland Health Quality and Complaints Commission, and was previously Chair of the Public Health and Research Development Committee of the National Health and Research Council and an Executive Member of the Council and past president of the Australian Cancer Society.

Professor Donald is Chairperson of the Repatriation Medical Authority having held that position since the establishment of the Authority in 1994.

**Professor John Kaldor**, PhD, Professor of Epidemiology and the Deputy Director of the National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research, University of New South Wales.

Prior to this appointment, Professor Kaldor worked as a researcher at the International Agency for Research on Cancer, Lyon, France. He is past President of the Australasian Epidemiological Association (1996-2000), and has research interests in infectious disease, cancer and epidemiological methods.

**Professor Andrew Wilson**, BMed Sci 1979, MBBS (Hons) QLD 1982, PhD, FRACP, FFAPHM, Professor of Public Health, Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Queensland.

In addition to his academic career, he has worked in senior public sector roles in the NSW Health Department as Director of Clinical Policy and Practice and then as Chief Health Officer and Deputy Director-General.

He is currently Executive Director, Policy, Planning and Resources for Queensland Health.

**Professor Gerard Byrne**, BSc(Med), MBBS (Hons), PhD, FRANZCP, is Head of the Discipline of Psychiatry within the School of Medicine at the University of Queensland and Director of Geriatric Psychiatry at the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital.

He is Chair of the Faculty of Psychiatry of Old Age, Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists and an Assisting Psychiatrist on the Queensland Mental Health Court. Professor Byrne has active research interests in depression, anxiety and dementia in older people.

**Professor Flavia Cicuttini**, MBBS (Hons I) 1982, PhD 1993, FRACP 1989, MSc (Lond) 1995, DLSHTM 1996, FAFPHM 1996, is Head of Rheumatology, Alfred Hospital and Head of Musculoskeletal Unit, School of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine, Monash University.

She leads an active research group aimed at understanding factors that affect the development and progression of osteoarthritis. She is Chair of the Victorian Consortium for Public Health and a current member of the National Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Conditions Advisory Group.

### **Authority Secretariat**

The Authority is assisted by a Secretariat located in Brisbane and may be contacted as follows:

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