



## **Australian Government**

### **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:

'reasonable hypothesis' standard (s196B(2)); and

'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 injuries.

### **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:

**Emeritus Professor Nicholas Saunders AO**, MD (Sydney), Hon LLD (Monash) was appointed to the Authority in July 2012 having served as Vice-Chancellor and President of the University of Newcastle, Australia for seven years. He has held academic and senior management positions at McMaster, Harvard, Flinders, Monash, Bond and Newcastle Universities. His main contributions to research and scholarship are in the fields of respiratory medicine, particularly sleep and breathing, and medical education.

Over the years Professor Saunders has served on many national committees and councils relevant to higher education, research and health care, including Chair of the National Health and Medical Research Council, and member of the Council of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians.

In 2002 Professor Saunders was awarded the Centenary Medal from the Australian Government for his contribution to academic medicine. In 2012, he was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia for distinguished service to medicine and higher education.

Professor Saunders is currently part-time Chief Commissioner of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency of Australia.

Professor Saunders' current term of appointment is from 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2017.

**Professor John Kaldor**, PhD. Professor Kaldor is a Professor of Epidemiology and NHMRC Senior Principal Research Fellow at the Kirby Institute, 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 active research interests in infectious disease, cancer and epidemiological methods.

Professor Kaldor's current term of appointment is from 2 February 2016 to 1 February 2019.

**Professor Gerard Byrne**, BSc(Med), MBBS (Hons), PhD, FRANZCP. Professor Byrne 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 Immediate Past Chair of the Faculty of Psychiatry of Old Age of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists.

Professor Byrne has active research interests in depression, anxiety and dementia in older people.

Professor Byrne's current term of appointment is from 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2017.

**Professor Flavia Cicuttini**, MBBS (Hons I) 1982, PhD 1993, FRACP 1989, MSc (Lond) 1995, DLSHTM 1996, FAFPHM 1996. Professor Cicuttini 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.

Professor Cicuttini's current term of appointment is from 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2017.

**Professor Jenny Doust**, BA, BEcons, BMBS, Grad Dip Clin Epi, PhD, FRACGP. Professor Doust is Professor of Clinical Epidemiology in the Centre for Research in Evidence Based Practice at Bond University and also works half-time as a general practitioner in Brisbane.

Her research areas of interest are the use of diagnosis, screening and monitoring test in general practice and the problem of overdiagnosis. She was a member of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (2008-2012), the Economic Sub-Committee of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (2005-2013), and Therapeutic Guidelines (Cardiovascular) advisory group (2011-2012) and is a member of the advisory group for the NPS MedicineWise.

Professor Doust's current term of appointment is from 1 October 2015 to 30 September 2020.

## **Authority Secretariat**

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

Address:                                   The Registrar  
  Repatriation Medical Authority  
  
  8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
  259 Queen Street  
  Brisbane QLD 4000  
  GPO Box 1014, Brisbane 4001

For General Enquires:           Telephone: (07) 3815 9404  
  Facsimile: (07) 3815 9412  
  E-Mail:           info@rma.gov.au

RMA Website:                           www.rma.gov.au