



# ESORT Update – 9 May 2023

## The Douglas decision and Treasury Laws Amendment Bill

Members were provided an update on recent action to inform ESORT members of the impacts of the *Douglas* decision and Schedule 9 – *Treasury Laws Amendment (2022 Measures No. 4) Bill 2022*.

On 5 May 2023, DVA facilitated an information session for interested representatives from ESORT, the Younger Veterans Contemporary Needs Forum and other organisations, from representatives of the Australian Taxation Office (ATO), Treasury, Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation and the Department of Defence.

At the 5 May meeting, the ATO provided an update on the tax implications of the *Douglas* case to date, and the ATO's strategy for contacting affected veterans. Treasury advised of the progress of the *Treasury Laws Amendment (2022 Measures No. 4) Bill 2022*, including Schedule 9, which introduces the Veterans Superannuation Tax Offset.

## DVA Veteran and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

The Department has established the Stakeholder and Communications (SEC) Division. A primary objective for SEC is to enhance engagement with veterans and other key stakeholders through delivery of a new DVA Veteran and Stakeholder Strategy (the Strategy). This will be developed using best practice engagement design and methods, including involvement of key stakeholders at critical points and providing greater opportunity for ESORT members and the broader veteran community to shape and influence DVA priorities and participate both formally and informally.

DVA invites ESORT members and other veterans who are interested in participating in the development of the Strategy to email [engagement@dva.gov.au](mailto:engagement@dva.gov.au). Discussions to inform the development of the Strategy will commence in June 2023.

## Advocacy Services Reform

DVA understands there is a strong interest in the reform of advocacy services. A working group chaired by the DVA General Counsel and comprised of nominees from ESOs with appropriate experience and relevant subject matter experts is being established to consider this issue.

The work will be informed by previous reviews and papers and will acknowledge the changing environment, including commercial entrants into the marketplace, the emergence of some state-funded advocacy services, the work of the Joint Transition Authority in Defence, the establishment of the Veterans' and Families' Hubs and the consultations currently underway about a pathway for legislation reform.

Options for advocacy services reform, developed by the working group, will be discussed in detail at the next meeting of the ESORT in October 2023.

## Review of Administrative Appeals Tribunal

The Australian Government has announced a reform of Australia's system of administrative review. This will abolish the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) and establish a new federal administrative review body. The reform includes a transparent, merit-based system of appointments. The new federal administrative review body will be designed to:

- be user focused with simpler, more accessible procedures
- provide support for vulnerable applicants
- be flexible to respond to changing needs
- provide effective and efficient case resolution.

The reform, which includes a transparent, merit-based system of appointments is intended to engender public trust and confidence; and improves the overall quality of administrative decision-making in government.

This work is being led by the Attorney General's Department and is being guided overseen by an expert advisory group. Public and agency submissions into the review closed on 12 May 2023. Additional information will be provided as it becomes available.

Further information on the Review of the AAT is available at:

[www.ag.gov.au/legal-system/new-system-federal-administrative-review](http://www.ag.gov.au/legal-system/new-system-federal-administrative-review).

## DVA Modernisation Program Supporting Systems and Claims Processing Improvements

The DVA Modernisation Program seeks to improve the experience for veterans, families and advocates interacting with DVA and the efficiency of the claims administration service by addressing issues that inhibit the ICT ecosystem from operating at its best.

This is an 18 month program of work that supports the immediate response to Recommendation 3 of the Interim Report of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide.

The immediate claims improvement projects will be delivered by June 2024. These include a pilot of the digital veteran card in the myGov wallet and improvements within the system such as document upload, nudge messaging; task notifications; and improved data sharing between DVA and Defence. Co-design sessions to inform this work commenced in late April and will continue throughout 2023.

One component of the DVA Modernisation program is a partnership with the Behavioural Economics Team of the Australian Government (BETA) in PM&C on simplification of medical forms for compensation. This project will assist with the administration of the claims processing system and veterans' services by making it simpler and easier for medical practitioners to provide supporting medical reports for veterans. The partnership will deliver results by 30 June 2023.

This measure directly responds to Recommendations 2 of the Royal Commission "Enhancements to support claims processing", and it is recognised that the vast majority of claims in the backlog are incomplete and require additional information in order for them to be determined.

Comments or feedback relating to medical forms project can be provided directly to [sally.dennington@dva.gov.au](mailto:sally.dennington@dva.gov.au).

## Improvements to DVA Claims Administration – tri-Act claims

The Department has completed a number of initiatives to improve the processing of complex claims. It now provides information on the DVA website encouraging veterans with a tri-Act claim to speak with an accredited advocate or DVA, to ensure the claim is complete and investigation ready.

The website information, including dual and tri-Act claims information, was developed in consultation with the Multi-Act Claims Working Group, the Operational Working Party and ESORT.

This information can be found at:

[What to expect after you have submitted a compensation claim | Department of Veterans' Affairs \(dva.gov.au\)](#)

[Making a claim for a service-related condition | Department of Veterans' Affairs \(dva.gov.au\)](#)