



Australian Government
Department of Veterans' Affairs

Businessline

Action Required: Compensation claims staff are to read and understand the Compensation Claims Communication Standards policy.

To:

Client Benefits Division (CBD) compensation claim delegates
Client Benefits Division (CBD) compensation claim support officers
CBD Directors and Assistant Directors

For information:

Secretary
Deputy Secretary Client Benefits
Deputy President
First Assistant Secretaries
Deputy Commissioners

SUBJECT: Read the Compensation Claims Communication Standards policy.

Purpose: To inform CBD staff that a new policy has been implemented relating to the frequency and mode of contact the Department expects staff to have with veterans during the compensation claims process, ensuring a minimum standard of communication is being maintained.

Key Points:

- The Client Benefits Division (CBD) undertook a broad review of the Department's Open Door Policy and developed a communications standards policy to support the compensation claims process.
- The new policy, titled Compensation Claims Communication Standards, outlines the Department's expectation regarding regular communication between staff and claimants during the compensation claim process, with the aim to ensure that a minimum consistent standard of communication is maintained.
- The policy applies across all Act and compensation claim types and includes:
 - The recommended contact points throughout the claims process, from claim registration through to claim determination;
 - The recommended method of contact i.e. outbound call, SMS and/or in writing
 - The timeliness of each contact point, including the frequency of contact where a claim may be awaiting allocation or is under investigation i.e. every

- 30 days unless otherwise negotiated in agreement with or at the request of a claimant.
- Links to other relevant policies and procedural advice on CLIK and the DVA website
- CBD and the Claims Process Improvement Division (CPID) have committed to review the policy in mid-2024.

Background:

- In 2021, the Commonwealth Ombudsman (the Ombudsman) conducted an own motion investigation into DVA's communication with veterans who make claims for compensation for injuries and conditions related to their service.
- The Ombudsman identified opportunities for improvement and made eight recommendations aimed at strengthening the accessibility and transparency of information available to veterans and the internal guidance available to support decision makers.
- In recommendation 7 of the report, the Ombudsman recommended that DVA develop a policy to outline the frequency and mode of contact it requires its delegates to have with veterans during the claims process.
- The report further noted that DVA's current contact policy (called the *Open Door Policy*) had not been reviewed since 2013.
- The Ombudsman's view is that while delegates should maintain some discretion to decide the best approach in each case, strengthening policy and procedural guidance will assist DVA to ensure a minimum consistent standard of communication is maintained and the individual needs of each veteran is taken into account.
- The Ombudsman suggested that regular communication with veterans may assist DVA to ensure veterans have a good understanding of, and realistic expectations about, the claim process and status of their claim, consequently minimising additional anxiety or uncertainty during the claim process.

For more information

The Compensation Claims Communication Standards policy has been published in the Compensation Claims Procedures library of CLIK and is available on the Compensation Collaboration SharePoint site.



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4 August 2023