



Australian Government
Department of Veterans' Affairs

Businessline

Action Required: *For information only*

To: All staff

Distribute to: All staff

For information:

Secretary
Deputy President
First Assistant Secretaries
Deputy Commissioners

SUBJECT: *Passage of Veterans' Entitlements, Treatment and Support (Simplification and Harmonisation) Act 2024: Single Review Pathway.*

Purpose: *To advise DVA staff of the Single Review Pathway changes as part of the broader passage of legislation, commencing on 21 April 2025.*

Key Points:

- The Veterans' Entitlements, Treatment and Support (Simplification and Harmonisation) Act 2024 (the VETS Act) has now passed through Parliament, after being introduced on 3 July 2024.
- A separate businessline was sent to the Department detailing the broader details of this Act and their effects from 1 July 2026.
- One component of the VETS commences prior to 1 July 2026, the Single Review Pathway.
- Decisions made under the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-related Claims) Act 1988* (DRCA) can be appealed to the Veterans' Review Board, 60 days following Royal Assent to the VETS Act.
- All appeals to the Veterans' Review Board (VRB) will be lodged directly from the client to the VRB, not via DVA.

Background:

In its Interim Report, the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide described the current legislative framework as 'so complicated that it adversely affects the mental health of some veterans and can be a contributing factor to suicidality.' The Interim Report made 13 recommendations, the first of which urged the Australian Government to develop and implement legislation to simplify and harmonise the framework for veterans' compensation, rehabilitation, and other entitlements. The Single Review Pathway is one component of this simplification and harmonisation.

Consultation

DVA has consulted with ex-service groups and other key stakeholders on the Royal Commission's recommendations between 17 October 2022 and 14 November 2022.

Consultation on the Government's 'Legislation Reform Pathway' occurred between February 2023 and May 2023 and consultation specific to the Exposure Draft of legislation was undertaken in early 2024.

Legislation

The VETS Bill was introduced into Parliament on 3 July 2024 and referred to the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee for inquiry and report shortly after.

The Senate Committee released its report on 3 October 2024, recommending that the Bill be passed by the Senate.

The VETS Act passed through Parliament on 13 February 2025.

Single Review Pathway

Currently, the review pathway for all decisions made by DVA is different, depending on which Act the claim falls under.

The review pathway for decisions under VEA and MRCA is a merits review of the claim by the Veterans' Review Board (VRB). DRCA clients seek a review direct to the Administrative Review Tribunal (ART). From 21 April 2025 (60 days after the VETS Act received Royal Assent), there will be a Single Review Pathway which will align the review pathways across all three Acts, offering all veterans and families the opportunity to retest their claims at the VRB.

This is the only feature of the single ongoing Act which will commence ahead of the broad 1 July 2026 commencement date.

Changes as a result of the Single Review Pathway

On 8 November 2024, a coordination request was sent to all areas of the department seeking any artefacts which referenced the appeal pathway. These have been reviewed, updated and will be sent to relevant business areas shortly.

Should any other documentation be found that requires appeal amendment based on the Single Review Pathway changes, below are the standard words and some additional updates to the appeal process.

- All applications to the VRB need to be made directly to the VRB, not through DVA. This can be done via email which is captured in the standard words below.
- s137 reports will continue to be needed but will be re-titled as 352D reports.
- Any reference to section 352 will need to be updated to 352A.

Standard paragraph for letters:

Right of Appeal

You can ask for a review within 12 months of receiving this letter directly to the Veterans' Review Board (VRB), setting out your reasons in writing.

Email your request to reviews@vrb.gov.au or send it by post to Veterans' Review Board (VRB), GPO Box 1631, SYDNEY NSW 2001. You can go to vrb.gov.au for further information.

You can find more information regarding understanding your decision and general review rights at dva.gov.au/appeals.

Further information:

Any queries on this businessline can be directed to:

LEGISLATION.IMPROVEMENT@dva.gov.au

Further information on the changes can be found at:

<https://www.dva.gov.au/about/royal-commission/veterans-legislation-reform>

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Simon Hill', written over a faint circular stamp.

Simon Hill
Assistant Secretary
Legislation Reform Branch
Policy Division

24/02/2025