

## VRB report presented to TIP Annual Conference

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### Recent activities at the VRB

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#### Member appointment Process

- Immediate challenge: the appointment / reappointment process for Board members, whose appointments were due to expire on 30 September 2010.
- Our achievements: advertising and interviews around the country were completed by the end of June.
- Current status: Due to the calling of the Federal election and the caretaker conventions, the appointment process was delayed. To ensure the Board is able to function, the Minister agreed to the extension of all Board members to 31 December 2010.

#### Current work trends

- 2009–10 intake: only marginal change (0.6%), recent statistics for September show a slight increase in lodgements (09/10 YTD – 870 and 10/11 YTD – 890).
- MRCA cases: 250 cases on hand and growing.
- Decreasing workload: MRCA not replacing VEA and increasing complexity.
- Approach to decreasing workload: requires careful resource management. If workload does not decrease this will place funding pressure on the Board.
- Times taken to process requests for information:

- response to request for information by Registrar (s148(6A)): increased to 81 days in 2010/11 from 75.4 days in 2009/10.
- response to request for information after adjournment (s152): decreased slightly to 130 days in 2010/11 from 133 days in 2009/10.
- Liaising with DVA for quicker turn around in response to requests for information.

#### **New active case management by the Board**

- No matter should get to the stage where 2 years have passed without being listed for hearing.
- Number of cases over 2 years old has reduced in the last 12 months from 7.3% down to 6.1% as at 30 June 2010.
- Aim is for matters to be finalised within 12 months of lodgement.

#### **The Role of Advocates and Representatives**

New active case management by the Board will involve advocates taking on a greater degree of professional responsibility for matters, including:

- only taking on work that can be efficiently undertaken to manage timetables;
- having the case ready to be heard as soon as practicable;
- presenting identified issues and relevant evidence clearly and succinctly;
- maintain objectivity and exercise independent judgment;

- advise of any sections of the Act(s), SoPs and factors, case law and policy which are relevant (regardless of whether they support or detract from the case); and
- act courteously and behave in an appropriate manner.

#### **Resources for Advocates and Representatives**

##### Submission templates:

- Submission templates have been enhanced (following feedback) and are available at [www.vrb.gov.au](http://www.vrb.gov.au)
- Reports from members: use of submission templates is extremely helpful.

##### Advocates' Seminar Training Package:

Where requested, the VRB is happy to facilitate the following seminar:

- Presented by Members (including a services member and a legal member)
- VEA entitlement case study
- Topics include: role of advocate, case preparation and completion of submission
- Presented in a number of locations nationally: 96% satisfaction rate.
- VRB training is a partnership with TIP and there is liaison between the VRB and respective TIP Chairs and TCGs before any courses are scheduled.