Veterans' Review Board

ANNUAL REPORT 2025–26

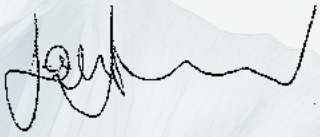


The Hon Matt Keogh MP
Minister for Veterans' Affairs
Minister for Defence Personnel
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister,

I am pleased to present to you the 2025–26 Annual Report of the Veterans' Review Board, as required by subsection 359DB of the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004.*

Yours sincerely,



Jane Anderson
Principal Member
2026

About the VRB

We are a specialist, high volume tribunal. We are innovative, responsive and seek to improve access to justice for all veterans, serving members and their families by resolving applications at the earliest possible opportunity in a cost effective and efficient way.

The law that establishes the Veterans' Review Board (VRB) and governs our operations is the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004* (MRCA).

About this report

Each year we must give the Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel a report, as required under the *Veterans' Entitlement Act 1986* (VEA). It provides an account of our activities from 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026.

This report is prepared for the Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel and the Parliament of Australia, the veterans who use our services and the organisations that support them.

VRB Vision and Values

VRB vision

To deliver justice by listening to veterans and making high quality decisions in a timely, cost effective and efficient way.

VRB values

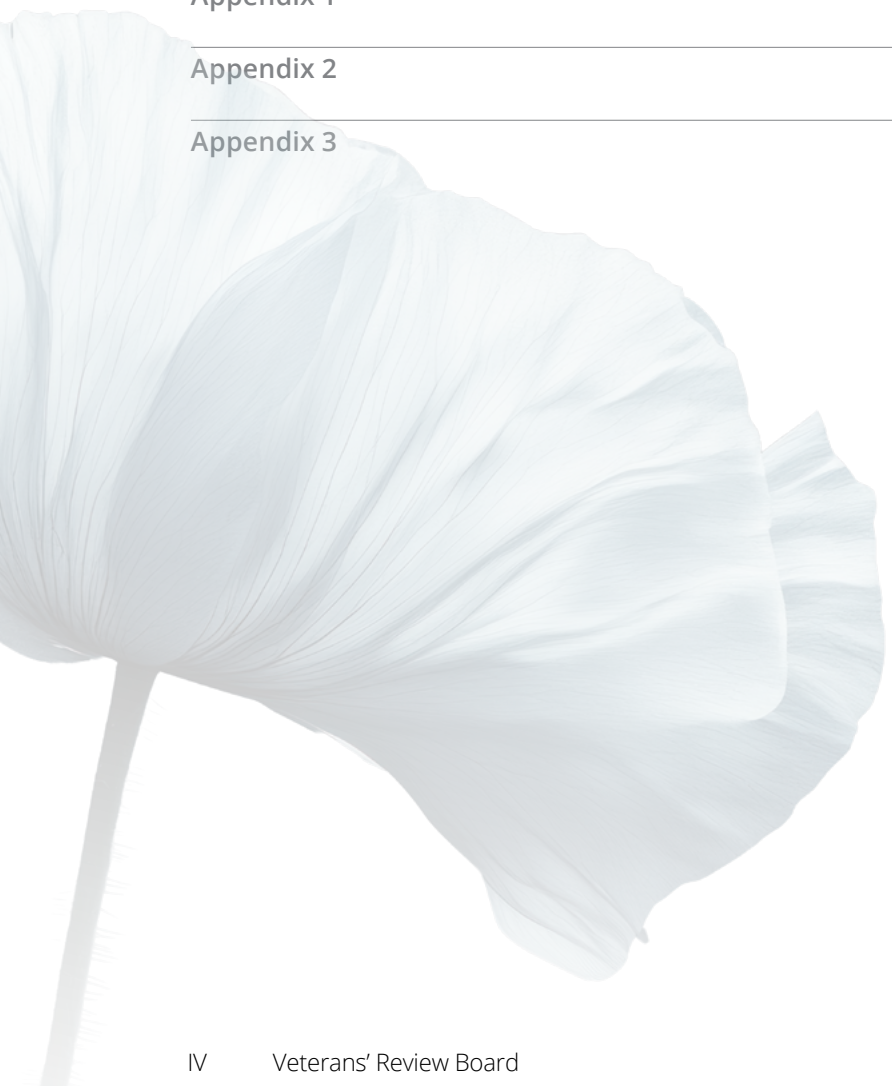
Fairness, professionalism, integrity, impartiality, independence, efficiency, accessibility and respect for the service of all veterans.

Our goal

To be an innovative and responsive tribunal that provides a specialist service to meet the unique needs of the veteran community.

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THE YEAR IN REVIEW



MESSAGE FROM OUR PRINCIPAL MEMBER AND NATIONAL REGISTRAR



We are pleased to present the Veterans' Review Board Annual Report for 2025-26.

Delivering independent merits review

The 2025–26 year was a period of significant change and achievement for the Veterans' Review Board (VRB). Against a backdrop of continued demand for review, the VRB maintained its focus on its core role; providing veterans, serving members and their families with an independent, accessible and fair review of decisions affecting their entitlements.

At the same time, the VRB played an important part in implementing the first tranche of reform to the veterans' compensation system introduced by the *Veterans' Entitlements, Treatment and Support (Simplification and Harmonisation) Act 2025* (VETS Act).

This new framework provided for the introduction of the Single Review Pathway; allowing all veterans regardless of their type of service to exercise their rights of review to the VRB.

The new framework also enables veterans for the first time in the VRB's history to lodge their applications for review directly with the VRB. These important changes required the VRB to adapt its processes and build new capability while continuing to deliver its existing statutory functions.

The year demonstrated the VRB's capacity to respond to substantial change while maintaining its focus on the quality and independence of merits review. Demand for the VRB's services remained strong. The VRB registered 4,723 applications during 2025–26, an increase of approximately 17% from the previous year.

The VRB increased its capacity to progress matters through review. The VRB finalised 3,499 matters and achieved a case clearance rate of 89.83%; as compared with 87.9% in the previous year. The VRB also conducted 777 hearings during the year, which was an increase of approximately 31%.

The VRB resolved 80% of applications using dispute resolution, which is consistent with previous years' outcomes. Recognising the advantages of quick and informal resolution of veterans' applications, the VRB's dispute resolution program aims to resolve matters at the earliest opportunity. While the program continues to adapt and evolve, the VRB prides itself on deploying innovative and contemporary dispute resolution models consistent with its statutory objective of providing a mechanism of review that is fair, just, accessible, economical, informal and quick.

Matters unable to be resolved by dispute resolution were finalised via VRB hearing. The VRB's adjournment rate from hearing remained low, at less than 7%. This highlights the value of the VRB's dispute resolution program in delivering effective case management, narrowing the issues in dispute, and providing a clear pathway for matters to be resolved to finality after only one hearing date.

Access to justice and the veteran experience

The VRB's role extends beyond the determination of individual applications. As part of Australia's administrative justice system, the VRB provides an independent avenue through which veterans, serving members and their families can challenge decisions affecting their entitlements and have those decisions reviewed on their merits.

Effective access to justice requires more than a formal right of review. It requires a process that people can understand, navigate and actively participate in. During the year, the VRB continued to improve the experience of users of its review services, including through the introduction of direct lodgement and a more accessible pathway to the VRB.

The VRB also continued to provide information and assistance to applicants and representatives and to support participation through a range of review and hearing arrangements. The VRB's approach recognises that veterans and their families have different circumstances and needs, and that a review process should be informal, accessible and proportionate, while maintaining the fairness and integrity of the decision-making process.

Listening to those who use the review system is an important part of this work. During the year, the VRB continued its engagement with the veteran community, including veterans' organisations, the Australian Veterans' Legal Advocacy Network, the Law Council of Australia, the Department of Veterans' Affairs, and participants in the VRB's advocates forums. This broad engagement provided an opportunity to explain the legislative changes, understand how reforms operate in practice, and identify opportunities to improve the review experience for the VRB's users.

Quality, consistency and independent decision-making

Timeliness is an important element of effective review, but it is not the only measure of performance. The quality, consistency and independence of decision-making are fundamental to the VRB's role and to confidence in its merits review process.

Preparing Members and staff for the new legislative framework was therefore a significant focus during the year. Members and staff participated in targeted training and information sessions addressing the practical application of the reforms, emerging legal issues, and developments relevant to the VRB's work. This investment in Member capability supported a consistent and high-quality approach to the application of the legislation while preserving the independence of individual Members to determine each matter on its merits.

The VRB will continue to strengthen professional capability through its training sessions as the legislative framework continues to develop and the VRB responds to new and increasingly complex issues.

Building capability and improving how we work

The VRB's performance during the year was underpinned by the commitment and professionalism of its Members and Registry staff.

The VRB's staff workforce strategy was endorsed during the year, providing a framework for strengthening Registry capability and ensuring that its workforce is aligned with future operational requirements, alongside maintaining corporate knowledge and developing the skills required to support the new legislative framework.

The VRB will also continue to improve the way it uses its resources, processes and technology. This includes exploring the responsible use of artificial intelligence and other technological innovations where these can support Members and staff, improve access to information, and assist the efficient administration of review.

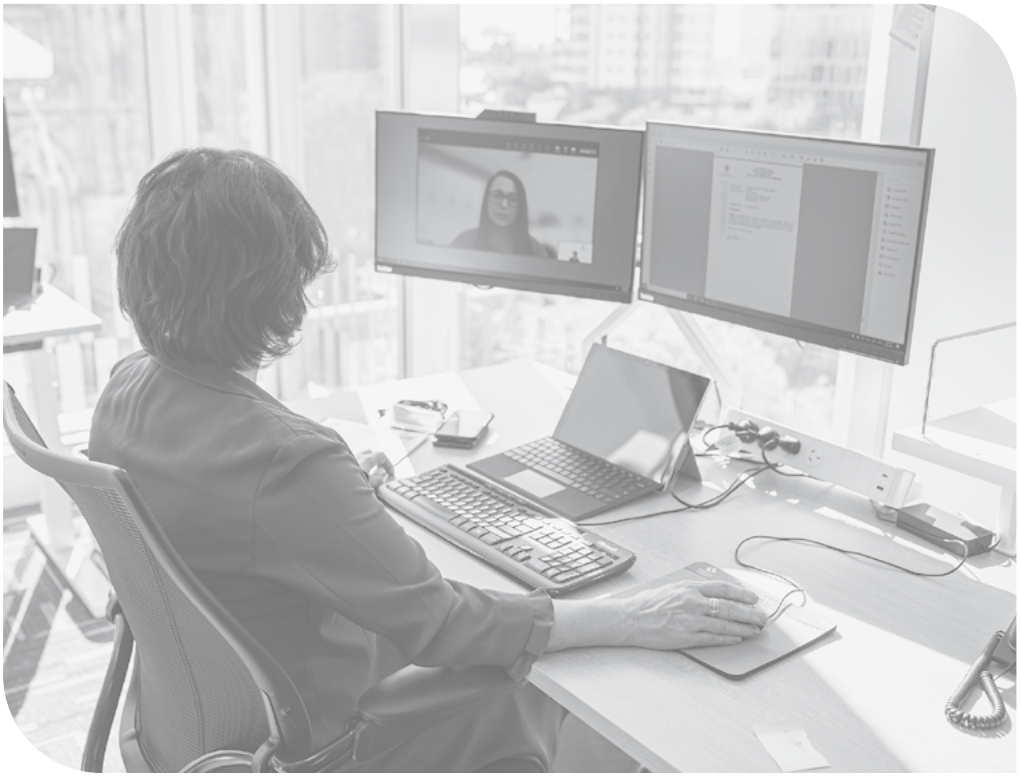
The VRB recognises, however, that innovation must be accompanied by appropriate safeguards. As such, the VRB will continue to prioritise privacy, security, transparency and accountability in considering new technologies, while ensuring that technological change supports — rather than compromises — the independence and integrity of merits review.

Looking ahead

The VRB enters 2026–27 with a stronger capacity to respond to change while continuing to deliver its core statutory function.

The achievements of 2025–26 - including increased hearing capacity, improved clearance performance, continued use of dispute resolution, implementation of significant reform, and investment in Member and Registry capability — reflect the commitment of the VRB's Members and staff and their capacity to adapt in a demanding operating environment.

The year ahead will be an opportunity to consolidate these gains and continue improving the way the VRB delivers independent merits review. The VRB's focus will remain on ensuring that its processes are fair, accessible, and proportionate, and that matters are determined with the quality, independence and timeliness expected of a contemporary merits review body. In addition, the VRB is committed to continuous innovation of its processes to ensure it



remains at the forefront of modern tribunal operations, and is responsive to the current and evolving needs and expectations of its users.

This means continuing to listen to veterans and their representatives, using evidence and experience to improve the review process, and making responsible and effective use of the VRB's resources.

The VRB will continue to work constructively with the Department of Veterans' Affairs, advocates and the broader veteran community, while maintaining the independence of its statutory decision-making. With the commitment of its Members and Registry staff, the VRB is well placed to build on the progress of 2025–26 and continue providing high-quality merits review for veterans, serving members and their families.

Acknowledgements

We wish to thank all those who have contributed to the VRB's work in 2025-26, including:

- Veterans and their families, for trusting the Board with their applications;
- Advocates, representatives, and stakeholders across the veteran community;
- Representatives of the Department of Veterans' Affairs and the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission; and
- Our Members and staff, whose professionalism, adaptability and commitment remain at the heart of everything we do.

OUR EVOLUTION

1914

The right to seek a review of veterans' pensions and entitlements was included in the *War Pensions Act 1914*

1917

The right of appeal to a Board came into existence in the *Australian Soldiers Repatriation Act 1917*

1920s

Ex–service organisations complain about the absence of an independent right of appeal.

1929

The first external appeals tribunals – the *War Pensions Entitlement and Appeals Tribunals* are established by the *Australian Soldiers Repatriation Act 1920.*

2011

The VRB starts its digital transformation and parties are able to provide documents to the VRB electronically – including section 137 reports.

2012

The VRB releases a handbook for advocates and representatives appearing before the VRB.

2014

The VRB launches 2 super registries in Sydney and Brisbane, designed specifically to meet veterans' needs including hearing rooms with technology to support videoconferencing.

2015

The VRB introduces Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR). Important changes are made to enhance the VRB's case management powers. ADR events are conducted digitally.

2021

The VRB launches Online Dispute Resolution ODR), the first of its type and starts to resolve certain applications in under 3 weeks.

A new website and the VRB Justice Portal are launched – allowing parties to upload documents directly to the VRB and live–track the status of cases throughout the whole review process.

The VRB expands its Vulnerable Veteran Protocol to include online triage of applications involving veterans at risk enabling a quicker and more tailored resolution of applications.

The VRB releases a new online guide for self–represented applicants and advocates appearing before the VRB.

The VRB enhances its online hearing platform to support complex applications with multiple participants.

2022

The VRB is increasing accessibility even further, with a focus on delivering a review mechanism tailored to the needs and expectations of its users. This includes offering a hybrid hearing model combining in- person and remote participation in a single hearing. As well as harnessing the specialist expertise of its members across the country, a hybrid model offers veterans and

Veterans' Review Board

1945

The number of appeal tribunals is increased to deal with an influx of applications at the conclusion of the Second World War.

1979

The appeals tribunals are replaced by the *Repatriation Review Tribunal.*

1984

The VRB was established by the *Repatriation Legislation Amendment Act 1984.*

2004

The VRB's jurisdiction is expanded to include appeals under the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004.*

2017

The VRB expands its ADR program and concurrent with a Senate Inquiry into suicide by veterans and ex–service personnel, the VRB commences a triage process for applications concerning vulnerable veterans.

2018

The VRB launches a new IT case management system, which streamlines processes and transitions the VRB to fully digital files.

2019

The VRB launches a 'decisions on the day' program; a 'fast–track review process for incapacity payment applications, and formalises the Vulnerable Veteran Protocol.

2020

In response to the COVID19 pandemic, the VRB provides a digital platform for virtual hearings, ensuring no hearing or ADR is cancelled in the face of the pandemic.

their representatives greater flexibility in the way they participate in VRB hearings.

The VRB is recognised for its ODR program, winning the Courts and Tribunals ADR Group of the Year at the Australian Disputes Centre ADR Awards for 2021.

2024

The VRB published a new General Practice Direction concerning therapeutic jurisprudence as part of its ongoing commitment to promoting emotional and psychological wellbeing and best practice in communicating with vulnerable veterans and their families.

2025

The VRB was proud to be the first area of the veterans' portfolio to begin implementation of key components of the new Act, with 2 significant changes introduced in April 2025:

- Direct Lodgement of VRB Applications
- Expanded Jurisdiction to review decisions made under the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-related Claims) Act 1988* (DRCA).

This new DRCA jurisdiction, which commenced in April 2025, applies to primary determinations made on or after the start date and will continue until the new single Act takes effect on 1 July 2026.

Delivering justice: a snapshot

Our Services	2024-25	2025-26
Clearance rate	88%	89.3%
Dispute resolution rate (including Online Dispute Resolution)	85%	80%
Time targets met	✓	✓

Feedback on our services	2024-25	2025-26
Compliment rate	1.8%	0.7%
Complaint rate	0.2%	0.4%

Our People	2024-25	2025-26
Members	38	38
Staff (full time equivalent employees)	22.23	26

Our Finances	2024-25	2025-26
Our Budget	5,508	5,348

At a glance

Highlights 2025-26		
Access to justice remained strong, with the VRB resolving 80% of applications without the need for a hearing.	The VRB's improved clearance rate at 89.83% reflected strong performance in managing incoming applications.	The VRB continued to deliver matters well within its time targets, despite increased demand.

OVERVIEW OF THE VRB





Overview of the VRB

Delivering justice for veterans: your right to be heard

We are a specialist, high volume tribunal that is innovative and responsive to its users. We seek to improve access to justice for all veterans, current serving members and their families by resolving applications at the earliest possible opportunity in a cost effective and efficient way.

What we do

We are less formal than a court. Where possible, we help veterans or their family members resolve their applications by talking through the issues at an 'outreach' with a Conference Registrar or at a conference with a Commission representative. If an application cannot be resolved, our members will decide the case at a hearing.

We can only hear cases where the law gives us this authority. The types of decisions that we most commonly review relate to:

- claims to accept liability or entitlement for a service injury, disease or death
- applications for increase in disability pension
- compensation for permanent impairment or incapacity for work
- claims for war widow(er)'s or orphan's pension.

Our powers

In reviewing a decision, we take a fresh look at the facts, law and policy relating to that decision. In many cases, new information is provided to us that was not available to the original decision-maker. We consider all of the material before us and decide what the legally correct decision is or, if there can be more than one correct decision, the preferable decision. We can exercise all the powers and discretions available to the original decision–maker.

We have the power to:

- affirm a decision (the original decision is unchanged)
- vary a decision (the original decision is changed in some way)
- set aside a decision and substitute a new decision (we make a new decision); or
- remit a decision to the decision–maker for reconsideration (we ask the decision-maker to reconsider the whole decision again, or some aspect of it).

Our objective

Whilst the VRB is an independent statutory tribunal, we are not a separate Commonwealth entity under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*. Rather, we are considered a Secondary Statutory Structure, receiving our funding and corporate services from the Department of Veterans' Affairs. As a result, we do not have a budget allocation in the Portfolio Budget Statements.

Our objective is set out in law. In carrying out our functions, we must pursue the objective of providing a mechanism of review of administrative decisions that:

- is accessible
- is fair, just, economical, informal and quick
- is proportionate to the importance and complexity of a matter, and
- promotes public trust and confidence in the decision–making of the VRB.



Who we are

Our need for specialist expertise is met by the appointment of appropriately qualified and experienced members in the categories of Senior Member, Member and Services Member. Each member is appointed by the Governor–General on the recommendation of the Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel. Additionally, to be considered for appointment, Services Members (who have military experience) must be nominated by an ex–service organisation. Members of the VRB are statutory appointees and are not public servants employed by the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

All our members must have:

- a high level of integrity
- sound judgment
- legal, military, health or other professional skills
- excellent communication and interpersonal skills
- the ability to conduct hearings
- a capacity to make fair decisions quickly.

At 30 June 2026, there were 38 members of the VRB. Table 1 shows the breakdown of the membership by category.

Table 1: VRB membership, 30 June 2026

CATEGORY OF MEMBER	TOTAL (WOMEN)
Principal Member, full time	1 (1)
Senior Member full time	1
Senior Members, sessional	10 (2)
Services Members, sessional	15 (6)
Members, sessional	11 (2)
TOTAL	**38 (11)**

Principal Member

Our Principal Member is Ms Jane Anderson. Ms Anderson commenced as Principal Member of the VRB on 31 January 2018 for a term of 5 years. She was appointed for a third term on 31 January 2026 for a period of 3 years. Ms Anderson holds a full- time statutory appointment.

National Registrar

Our National Registrar is Ms Katrina Harry PSM. Katrina also performs the role of the VRB's Chief Legal Counsel. The National Registrar's statutory function is to assist the Principal Member in managing the functions of the VRB across Australia.

Staff

The National Registrar is supported by VRB staff, employed under the *Public Service Act 1999* and made available by the Secretary of the Department of Veterans' Affairs. The VRB does not have any Senior Executive Service positions. At 30 June 2026, there were 26 fulltime equivalent staff at the VRB. Staff are organised into 2 groups: client services and tribunal services.

Client Services teams include:

- South Eastern Registry headed by Jacqui Skerman
- North West and South Australian Registry headed by Jodi Ross, and
- Dispute Resolution team headed by Jane Warmoll, who is also a Senior Legal Officer.

The Tribunal Support team includes member support, financial management and internal communications. Mark Huthnance is the VRB's Finance Manager, Carolyn Gordon is the VRB's Business Systems Manager and Ariane Mandavy is the Acting Executive Officer.

Staff in our client service teams:

- provide a dedicated single point of contact for each veteran, ensure applications are 'event–ready' and facilitate the listing of dispute resolution processes and hearings
- liaise with veterans and advocates about their cases and give them information, and
- provide support services to conference registrars and members. Conference registrars conduct VRB dispute resolution processes.



Figure 1 Organisational structure

VRB organisational chart as at 30 June 2026

Principal Member

Ms Jane Anderson

VRB MEMBERS

Senior Members

COL Evan Carlin

Ms Mary Desses

MAJ Robert Douglass

LTCOL Michael (Mike) Kelly

ASSOC PROF David Letts AM CSM RAN

Ms Amanda MacDonald

Mr Peter McCusker

LTCOL Glenn O'Brien

LTCOL Gerard O'Shea

Mr Raymond Smith

CMDR Neville Wyatt RFD RAN

Services Members

BRIG Mark Bornholt (Retd)

COL Catherine Carrigan

Mr Steven Coghlan

BRIG William Date ADC

RADM Mark Hill AM CSC RAN

Ms Katie Jugowitz LCDR

LCDR Mark Karlovic

MAJGEN Mark Kelly AO DSC

Mr John Kirton

WGCDR Jodi Mather

CDRE Vicki McConachie

MAJGEN Francis Roberts AO (Retd)

CAPT Felicity Rogers RAN

Mr Scott Warr

CMDR Sophia White RAN

Members

Dr Anthony Bragg MMed FRACP

CDRE Brett Dowsing JP RAN (Retd)

PROF (CLIN) Gerard Gill RFD MBBS PhD FRACGP FAFPHM FARGP

Mr Ross Glover

GPCAPT Louise Hunt

Dr Rondhir Jithoo

Dr (SQNLDR) Kim Morgan-Short MBBS

Mr Troy Newman

Mr Joshua Nottle

Mr Scott Seefeld AVM

AVM Mark Skidmore AM (Retd)

Veterans' Review Board

National Registrar & Chief Legal Counsel
Ms Katrina Harry PSM

Tribunal Services

Finance Manager
Mr Mark Huthnance

Member & Executive Support
Ms Ariane Mandavy

Business Systems Manager
Ms Carolyn Gordon

Client Services

South Eastern Registry
Ms Jacqui Skerman
Registrar

North West South Aust. Registry
Mrs Jodi Ross
Registrar

ADR Team
Ms Jane Warmoll
ADR Registrar & Senior Legal Officer



DELIVERING JUSTICE



Delivering justice

The VRB serves veterans and their families by listening and making decisions about their applications for review.

In this section of our annual report, we provide detailed information about the number of veterans' applications we handled in 2025-26, how quickly we resolved them, and the key factors affecting the delivery of these services.

Year in review

Key Points		
The VRB's improved clearance rate at 89.83% reflected stronger performance in managing incoming applications.	The VRB continued to deliver matters well within its time targets, despite increased demand.	Access to justice remained strong, with the VRB resolving 80% of applications without the need for a hearing.

Number of applications finalised

This is an indicator of how the VRB is carrying out its role of delivering justice for veterans, current serving members and their families.

Targets	Results
Finalise more applications than received (3,896 in 2025-26)	**Target not met:** The VRB finalised 3,499 applications during the year, achieving a strong 89.83% clearance rate and maintaining momentum in reducing overall caseload.

Applications finalised within time

This is an indicator of how quickly the VRB deals with applications. The VRB measures time taken for the stages within its control. It includes applications finalised within our dispute resolution programs, as well as applications that proceed to a hearing.

The time taken to finalise applications can depend on a range of factors including the availability of the parties (particularly volunteer advocates) to participate in dispute resolution events and hearings, the nature and complexity of the applications, and the overall level of VRB resources available. A target based on an average figure takes these variables into account.

Targets	Results
ADR applications: average number of applications finalised within 6 months	**Target met:** on average, applications in the ADR program were finalised within 4.7 months.
All applications: average number of applications finalised within 12 months	**Target met**: on average, all applications were finalised in 5.8 months. The VRB continued to outperform time targets despite a small increase in our processing times and managed increased demand.
Less than 10% of applications adjourned at hearing	**Target met:** 6.8% of applications were adjourned at hearing. The VRB's dispute resolution process is designed to ensure matters are 'hearing ready' and provide applicants with clear guidance on how to prepare for a hearing. This results in smoother proceedings, with less delay and fewer adjournments.

Proportion of appeals to the ART

This criterion indicates the extent to which the VRB is providing a mechanism of review that is fair and just and that promotes public trust and confidence in its decision–making.

Targets	Results
Less than 10% of decisions made by the VRB in 2025-26 appealed to the Administrative Review Tribunal (ART)	**Target met:** Appeals to the ART in 2025–26 amounted to 3.1% of decisions made by the VRB in 2025–26.

Accessible to the veteran community

Targets	Results
Dispute resolution is available to all applicants and is the preferred option for resolving appeals	We resolved 80% of applications by dispute resolution.
Provide accessible and welcoming venues across Australia, including regional areas	We conducted hearings in-person and online and also offered 'hybrid' hearings, with a mixture of in-person and remote participants at a single hearing. Overall, we conducted 777 hearings.
Strengthened digital infrastructure and processes to support the VRB's expanded jurisdiction and the introduction of direct lodgment, helping to provide a more accessible and streamlined pathway for applicants seeking review	Progressed improvements to digital lodgment processes to support applicants in navigating the review process and to improve the efficiency and accuracy of application processing. Continued to develop the VRB's digital capability to support its evolving jurisdiction, improve accessibility for veterans and their families, and enable the Registry to manage applications effectively.
Increase the veteran community's awareness of the VRB's role and services	We continued to update and refresh information on the VRB website to increase awareness of the VRB's role and services. We conducted both in-person and online advocates' forums across Australia in 2025-26 and participated in a variety of stakeholder events.

Analysis of our performance against our purpose

The VRB operated in a complex and rapidly changing environment in 2025–26. Importantly, the VRB supported the implementation of significant legislative reforms to the veterans' claims and review system - while continuing to deliver its core merits review functions.

During the year, the VRB implemented of a new system of direct lodgement of VRB applications and the transition of DRCA matters to the Single Review Pathway. Both reforms required significant changes to the VRB's processes, systems and operating arrangements, and were delivered successfully alongside the VRB's ongoing commitment to provide accessible and timely merits review services to veterans and their families.

The VRB continued to manage a substantial caseload while maintaining a strong level of finalisation activity. The VRB received 3,896 applications during the year, broadly consistent with the 3,989 applications received in 2024–25. At the same time, the VRB finalised 3,499 applications, closely maintaining the previous year's strong result of 3,505 finalisations. This level of output, achieved while undertaking significant reform activity, demonstrates the VRB's continued capacity to manage demand and progress matters towards resolution.

The VRB also made significant gains in overall case clearance during the year. The clearance rate increased to 89.83% at 30 June 2026. This improvement reflects the VRB's focus on effective case management, timely progression of matters and making best use of available member and registry resources.

Dispute resolution remained an important part of the VRB's approach to resolving applications as early and efficiently as possible. It continued to provide an important pathway for applicants to resolve matters without the need to attend a hearing. For those matters requiring specialist review by a panel of VRB members, hearings played an important role in determining matters to finality. The VRB continued to provide accessible hearing services across jurisdictions, including through online and in-person participation.

Budget efficiency

The VRB continued to exercise careful financial management during 2025–26. This was achieved while responding to significant operational demands as well as implementing major reforms, including direct lodgment and the expansion of the VRB's jurisdiction via the Single Review Pathway.

Total expenditure in 2025–26 was $5.348 million, a reduction of $160,000, or 2.9%, compared with expenditure of $5.508 million in 2024–25. This result demonstrates the VRB's continued focus on using its resources efficiently while maintaining a strong level of finalisation activity and delivering significant reforms alongside its core merits review functions.



Caseload overview

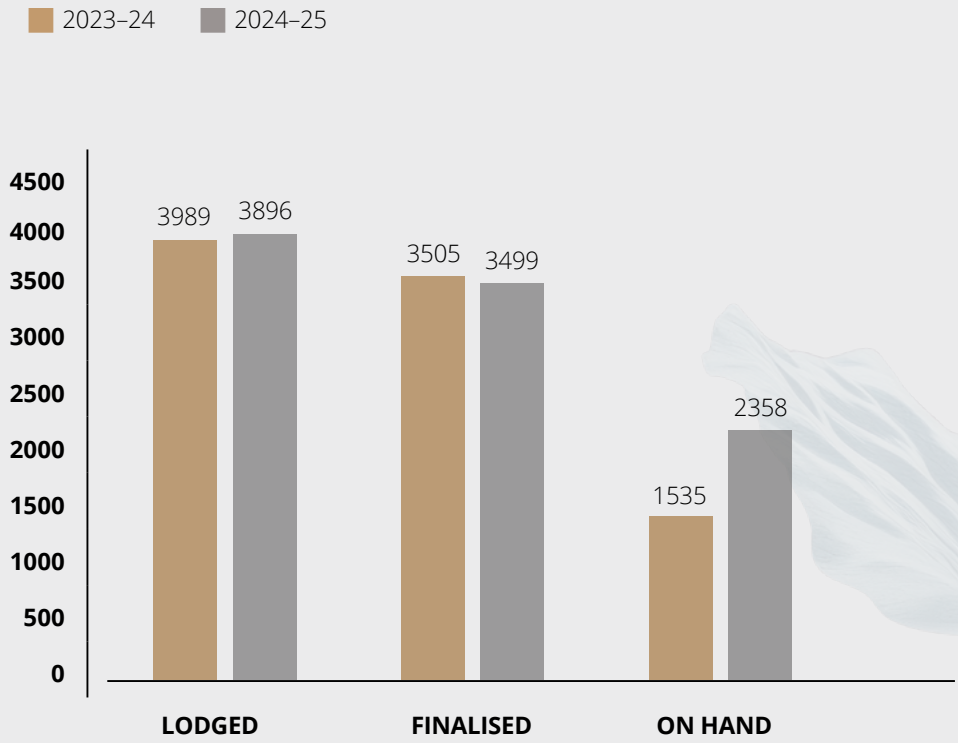
The VRB received 3,896 applications in 2025–26, broadly consistent with the 3,989 applications received in the previous reporting year.

The VRB continued to manage a substantial caseload while undertaking significant reform activity, including the introduction of direct lodgment and the addition of DRCA applications via the Single Review Pathway.

The VRB finalised 3,499 applications in 2025–26, maintaining a strong level of finalisation activity compared with 3,505 applications finalised in 2024–25.

Chart 3.1 illustrates the number of applications lodged and finalised in the last 2 financial years, and the number of applications on hand (in progress) at 30 June in each year.

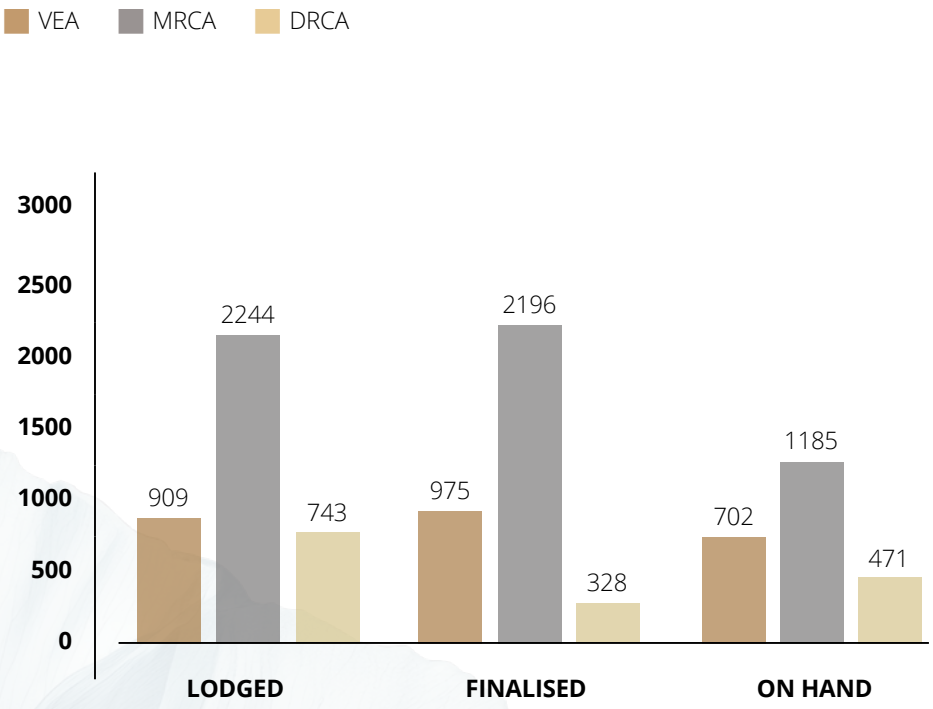
The Board measures lodgments by reference to section 352D reports, which marks the commencement of the VRB review process. This approach reflects the Board's established method of measuring lodgements and provides a consistent basis for measuring applications received and comparing workloads over time.



Our jurisdictions

The VRB's jurisdiction was significantly expanded from 21 April 2025 to include the review of determinations made under the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-related Claims) Act 1988* (DRCA). This reporting period represents the first full year in which DRCA matters have been within the VRB's jurisdiction.

During the reporting year, 57.6% of applications were made in relation to the MRCA (2244), 23.33% in relation to the VEA (909) and 19.07% in relation to the DRCA (743).



How we resolve applications

The VRB resolves applications through a range of pathways, with dispute resolution continuing to play an important role in resolving matters as early and efficiently as possible. In 2025–26, 80% of applications were resolved through a dispute resolution process. This can include online dispute resolution, a decision being made on the papers without a full hearing, a decision by the VRB that reflects an agreement between the veteran and the Commission, or a veteran choosing not to proceed further with an application for review.

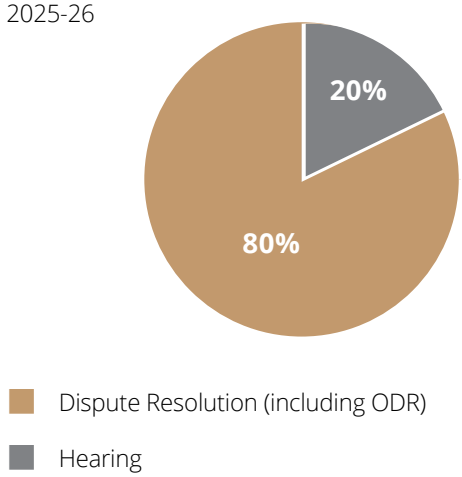
The high proportion of applications resolved through dispute resolution reflects the VRB's continued focus on providing timely and effective pathways to resolution. In 31.49% of applications resolved through dispute resolution, an outcome was reached that was favourable to the veteran.

For the remaining 20% of applications that could not be resolved through dispute resolution, the VRB conducted a hearing and made a decision following consideration of the evidence and submissions. In 25.14% of these applications, the VRB made a new decision that was favourable to the veteran.

Overall, as a proportion of the number of primary decisions made by the Commissions that could have been reviewed by the VRB, the VRB made a different decision in 1.17% of cases that were resolved in dispute resolution and 0.19% of cases that went to a hearing.

Chart 3.3

Mode of finalisation of applications for review of decisions, 2025-26





External scrutiny

Our operations are subject to external scrutiny through various mechanisms.

Our decisions can be appealed to the Administrative Review Tribunal (ART) or the courts. We can also receive requests made under the Freedom of Information Act, complaints to the Commonwealth Ombudsman and other bodies, audits by the Australian National Audit Office. We can also be called to attend senate estimates hearings.

Appeals 2025-26

If a veteran is unhappy with a VRB decision, he or she can appeal to the ART for a review "on the merits." This means the ART will take a fresh look at the relevant facts, law and policy and arrive at its own decision.

The table below shows the number of ART appeals lodged in 2025-26 as a proportion of VRB decisions and the number of cases where the ART, at hearing, made a different decision to the VRB. This amounted to 0.3% of all VRB decisions which could have been appealed to the ART.

Year	ART appeals lodged	Proportion of total VRB decisions	Finalised	Percentage of cases where ART at hearing decided differently to VRB*
2024-25	65	1.85%	129	1.0%
2025-26	108	3.1%	147	0.03%

*** This measure identifies those appeals heard by the ART and excludes those cases where a consent agreement was reached by the parties.**

Court Decisions 2024-25

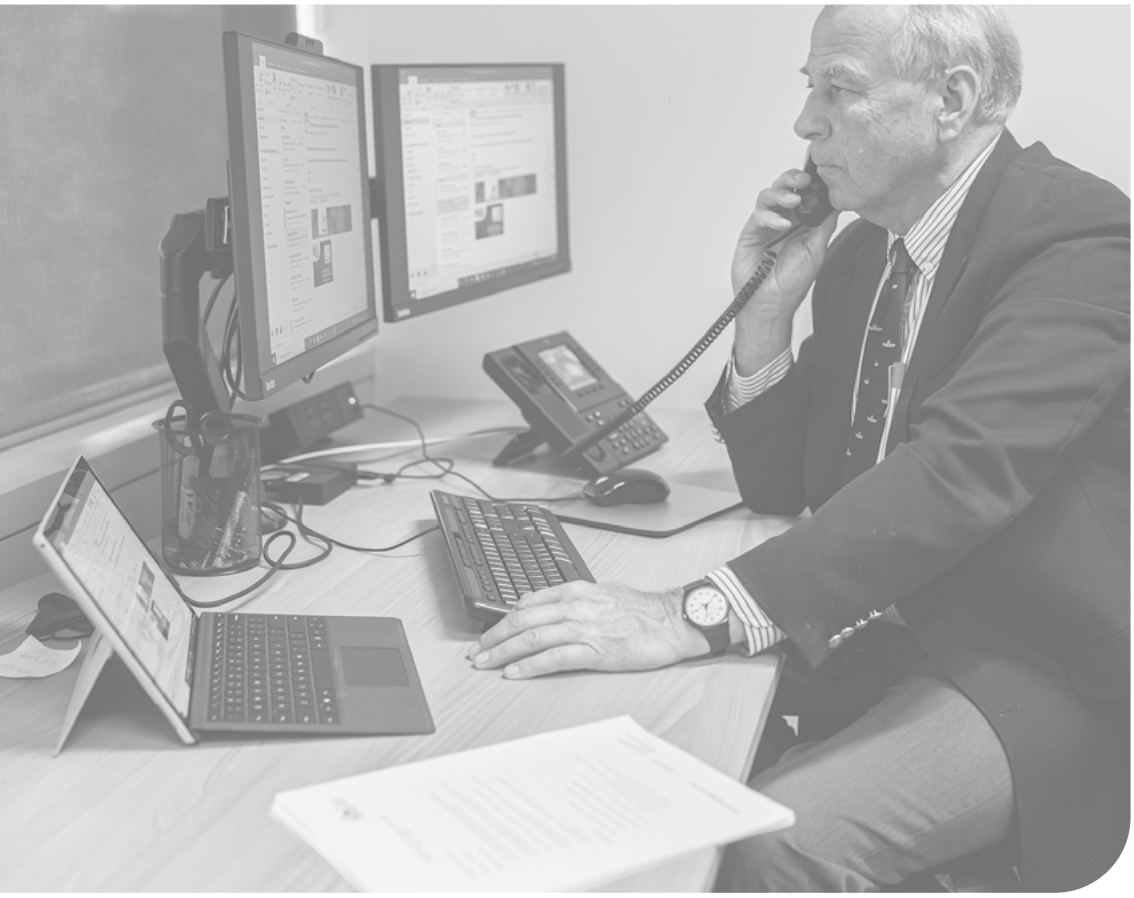
There were no Federal Court decisions relating to the VRB in 2025-26.

Freedom of information 2025–26

In 2025-26, 11 requests for access to documents were received under the Freedom of Information Act. All applications were finalised during the reporting year and there were no requests for internal reviews received during this period.

Information Publication Scheme

Agencies subject to the Freedom of Information Act are required to publish information to the public as part of the Information Publication Scheme (IPS). This requirement is in Part II of the Act and has replaced the former requirement to publish a section 8 statement in an annual report. Each agency must display on its website a plan showing what information it publishes in accordance with the IPS requirements. Our plan is on our website.





Complaints to external bodies 2025-26

In 2025-26, there were no requests for review made about our operations to the Office of the Information Commissioner concerning a review of a decision made by the VRB.

In relation to Freedom of Information, no complaints were made to the Commonwealth Ombudsman or the Australian Human Rights Commission.

Reports on our operations

Our operations were not the subject of any report by the Auditor–General, any parliamentary committee or the Commonwealth Ombudsman in 2025-26.

Services to veterans

Each application is different and we work with the parties to find the best way to resolve an application. Options for resolving applications include – Online Dispute Resolution, a dispute resolution process (such as an outreach or conference), or a VRB hearing.



Dispute Resolution

Our review processes are designed to resolve applications using dispute resolution.

Processes are also designed to ensure that that those matters that are unable to be fully resolved via dispute resolution can be finalised at hearing informally and without undue delay.

Dispute resolution is available to all veterans across Australia. Dispute resolution can be faster than a hearing and gives the veteran more control over the outcome.

Outreach is the first step in the VRB's dispute resolution program. Outreach is about helping the parties resolve applications.

The VRB Conference Registrars and Members are dispute resolution experts who will guide the parties through the process. They are also independent.

At an outreach, the applicant and their advocate can talk to a VRB Conference Registrar or Member about the decision they have received from DVA. The VRB will contact applicants and advocates to set up a time for this discussion. It can take place by phone, video or face–to–face.

The VRB Conference Registrar or Member will explain the review process and ask the applicant or their advocate to explain why they are unhappy with the decision. They will also help the applicant and advocate to identify the issues in the case and discuss the next best steps to resolve it.



Outreaches are private, confidential sessions and the VRB Conference Registrar or Member will not disclose anything an applicant or advocate has said without their consent.

In some cases, the VRB Conference Registrar or Member may recommend that an application be resolved by a favourable decision 'on the papers'.

If the case can be resolved in this way, the parties will be sent a copy of a draft decision.

If the applicant accepts the draft, the VRB will make a final decision, a copy of which is sent to the parties.

Online Dispute Resolution

The VRB's Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) program increases veterans' access to justice by providing a modern, simple, efficient, user–friendly and accessible forum for veterans, serving members and families seeking review of decisions that affect their interests.

ODR lets serving members, veterans and their families resolve applications when and where it's convenient for them.

What are the benefits of ODR?

ODR further advances the benefits of the VRB dispute resolution program ('offline dispute resolution'). ODR sits alongside offline dispute resolution, providing an easy and accessible process whereby VRB Conference Registrars facilitate the early resolution of applications.

ODR broadens veterans' access to justice by:

- giving greater choice and flexibility to veterans to resolve their applications
- providing a more accessible and informal way of resolving certain applications
- removing restrictions on the time at which the VRB online processes can be used
- avoiding veterans having to travel lengthy distances (particularly from regional locations) to participate
- avoiding veterans needing to take time off work
- enabling veterans to participate from their homes (or places where they feel most comfortable) and alleviating the need to attend the VRB in-person
- veterans not being restricted to being in the same locations as their representatives
- providing an immediate start to the resolution process, allowing veterans to resolve their applications as quickly as possible
- allowing veterans to communicate at a pace that suits them; rather than communicating 'on–the–spot'.

In addition, not only does VRB ODR provide greater choice and flexibility, it also alleviates some of the pressures placed on the volunteer advocates who support veterans.

How it works

There are 3 steps involved:

1. **Request ODR**
   After a person's application is with the VRB, the person ("the applicant") can ask for ODR by using the VRB Justice Portal.

2. **Facilitation**
   A Conference Registrar will help the applicant to resolve their application online.

3. **Decision**
   If an application can be resolved by ODR, the applicant will be given a binding decision, delivered online.

How does an applicant request ODR?

ODR provides an applicant with an opportunity to resolve their application fairly and quickly. It is the applicant's choice to request ODR.

There is no form required. An applicant can simply upload a document (e.g. a screen shot or word document) into the VRB Justice Portal saying, "I would like my application to proceed to ODR". An applicant should do this after:

- an application for VRB review has been lodged with DVA
- DVA or the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission (MRCC) provides the application and the Section 137/352D report to the VRB
- an applicant tells us if they have a representative, and
- the applicant (or their representative) have registered for the VRB Justice Portal.

Facilitation

A Conference Registrar will start the facilitation process within a week of receipt of the veteran's election to proceed via ODR. Online Conference Registrars will have a facilitative, inquisitorial role and provide evaluative assistance to veterans from the start of the ODR process.

The veteran will not be asked to submit evidence until requested by the Conference Registrar. This will avoid the scenario where applicants who are uncertain as to the material required to support their cases often upload large quantities of documents, many of which may not be relevant to the application.

Any request by the Conference Registrar for additional material will be made online, and if any such material is obtained, it will likewise be required to be submitted online, via the VRB Justice Portal.

The time to resolve an application will depend on the complexity of the application and the issues involved. However, the VRB has set a relatively short timeframe of 2 weeks for the provision of material through the ODR process in order that applications can be progressed without undue delay.

If a veteran is required to provide additional evidence and they cannot meet the short timeframe, the application can be referred out of ODR and into the VRB's offline dispute resolution program. This will be appropriate in those cases where further evidence gathering needs to be undertaken and is an opportunity for a veteran to have more time to prepare his or her case.



A VRB decision

Once the facilitation process is complete, a VRB member will be assigned to the application. If the VRB Member considers the application can be resolved by a decision, a draft decision will be communicated to the parties.

If the veteran consents to the draft decision, the application will proceed to a virtual hearing before the VRB Member who will deliver the reasons for the decision orally online to the parties.

The veteran and a representative of the respondent will be notified of the hearing and invited to attend. Given the 'virtual' nature of the hearing, either party can participate in the hearing from any location with internet access.

If an application can't be resolved via ODR because the veteran has not consented to a decision, within a specified short timeframe he or she can elect to (1) discontinue their application; (2) have their application referred to offline dispute resolution; or (3) proceed to a hearing (including the option of a virtual hearing) before a panel of 3 VRB members.

Hearings

We encourage all veterans to participate in their hearings. Attending a hearing may seem daunting, but VRB hearings are much less formal than a traditional legal hearing. VRB hearings are held in private (online or in-person) and they are not open to the public. A representative from the Commission will generally not attend VRB hearings. Applicants are welcome to bring a friend or support person to their hearing, regardless of whether they are represented.

Our hearings generally take 1 or 1.5 hours.

Where possible, VRB members will make their decision on the day of a hearing and tell the veteran and his or her advocate the reasons for their decision. The veteran, the advocate and the Commission will also receive a written copy of the VRB's decision.

VRB decisions and reasons are not published or made public. They are only provided to the veteran, the representative (if applicable) and the relevant Commission.



Composition of hearing panels

In most review hearings, the VRB is made up of three members. One of the 3 members is a Senior Member, who generally has legal qualifications and presides over the hearing. Another is a Services Member, who has experience in the Australian Defence Force. The Services Member does not need to be from the same arm of service as the applicant seeking review, but whose general knowledge and experience of military service assists the panel in interpreting the material before it. The remaining panel member is a Member, who has relevant qualifications within the community and/or professional sector, for example, health professional expertise.

The three–member multi–disciplinary panel is one of the most important features of the VRB. The combined knowledge and experience of each category of membership provides an appropriate setting in which veterans, serving members and their families are able to tell their stories.

Information about our review process

The VRB website contains information about:

- how to apply
- the types of decisions the VRB can review; and
- steps to resolve an application at the VRB including online dispute resolution.
- Veterans and serving members can access the VRB Justice Portal from the VRB website.

Additional information and resources are available on the website, along with our Service Commitment and Vulnerable Veteran Protocol.



Service Commitment

The Veterans' Review Board (VRB) is a specialist, independent tribunal that reviews decisions affecting veterans, current serving ADF members, and their families. The VRB is committed to providing a mechanism of review which is accessible, fair, just, informal, economical, economical and quick.

Our commitments to you

We will treat you with respect and courtesy

- We will be polite, respectful and courteous and use language that is clear and understandable.

Access to our registry staff and offices

- By telephone: our staff will answer telephone questions from 9:00am to 5:00 pm on weekdays, except for national public holidays. You can contact us on 1800 550 460 from anywhere in Australia.
- In-person: please see our contact details.

We will deal with you fairly

- We are independent of the Repatriation Commission and Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission, who made your original decision. We will take a fresh look at the facts, law and policy that apply to your case.
- While we cannot give you legal advice, the ATDP Advocacy Register has information about advocates, who are free of charge and may be able to help you with your case.
- You or your representative will be given a reasonable opportunity to present your case and to access information or documents.
- We will provide you with reasons for how we arrived at the decision in your case.

We will operate in an efficient manner

- We will acknowledge receipt of applications.
- We will respond to enquiries within a reasonable time, generally within 3 business days.

Privacy and confidentiality

Hearings are held in private.

We will protect your personal information. We are bound by the *Australian Privacy Principles set out in the Privacy Act 1988.* Further information about how we handle personal information is available on our website.

How you can help us provide high quality service

You are required by law to assist the VRB. For an applicant, this means that you or your representative must use best endeavours to assist the VRB to fulfil its statutory objective (set out above).

So that we can meet our commitments, you will need to:

- comply and cooperate with any relevant practice directions or specific directions given by us
- let us know in advance if you need any assistance to participate effectively in proceedings
- take reasonable care for your own (and others) health and safety when at our premises and cooperate with any reasonable instruction, policy or procedure
- keep scheduled events unless it is not possible to do so, in which case you should contact us as soon as possible
- give us full and accurate information
- tell us promptly of any changes to your contact details
- be polite, respectful and courteous. We will restrict how we deal with people who are abusive or threatening to our staff or members.

Vulnerable veteran protocol

This protocol addresses the needs of those veterans and current serving members who face particular difficulties in the review process, and whose ability to understand and effectively present their case or fully participate in the review process may be impaired.

Early identification and priority attention

A veteran may be identified as vulnerable at any stage during the review process. There are various ways in which the VRB can identify a veteran who may be vulnerable, or at risk of self- harm or harm to others. These sources include:

- the veteran or his/her family member
- the veteran's advocate
- treating health professionals
- government departments or agencies, including the Veterans' Affairs and Defence Departments, and law enforcement agencies
- VRB members, Conference Registrars or staff.

It is important that vulnerable veterans are identified as early as possible in the review process and that appropriate action is taken by the VRB as soon as possible to manage their applications. Where the VRB identifies a vulnerable veteran, the veteran's application will be immediately triaged for an on–papers review by one of the VRB's subject matter experts. If the application cannot be resolved on the papers, consideration will be given to arranging an urgent hearing with a full panel or a directions hearing, depending on the particular circumstances. If a veteran is unrepresented, the VRB will assist the veteran to appoint an advocate.

Hearing arrangements

All VRB hearings are held in private. In listing a hearing, the VRB will liaise with the veteran's advocate, treating health professional and/or Departmental Liaison Officer. Consideration of a range of factors include:

- the most convenient/appropriate time for the hearing for the veteran and whether the veteran attends in-person, by phone or video conference
- the attendance of support persons including the veteran's advocate, treating health professional or others such as family members or assistance dogs etc
- the panel composition (e.g. an all–female or male panel or members with specialist expertise).

VRB members conducting a hearing will be specifically informed of any cases scheduled which involve a vulnerable veteran and that this should be properly taken into account in conducting the review. At any hearing, VRB members are committed to creating an open and supportive environment. Questioning of the vulnerable veteran by members is to be done in a sensitive and respectful manner and questions will be formulated in a way that the vulnerable veteran understands. Additionally, the VRB may consider taking evidence from family members or close friends. During the hearing, the VRB will also ensure any vulnerable veteran is provided with breaks as appropriate. In every case the VRB will endeavour to complete the review without delay.

Notification of the VRB's decision

At the conclusion of any VRB hearing involving a vulnerable veteran, careful consideration will be given as to how the decision should be delivered; i.e. orally on the day of the hearing, or in writing following the hearing. The presiding Senior Member will make this decision after consultation with the advocate, treating health professional or other support person.

If a decision is to be given in writing, either following a hearing or on–papers review, Registry staff will contact the veteran's advocate, treating health professional and/or Departmental Liaison Officer to make arrangements for the decision to be conveyed to the veteran. For example, a written decision can be delivered to the office of the veteran's advocate or treating health professional. The aim is to ensure that the veteran has appropriate support persons available and accessible to discuss the VRB's decision, whether favourable or unfavourable.

Generally, Registry staff will seek to ensure that decisions are not delivered on a Friday, or prior to a public holiday (or commemorative events such as Anzac Day), or any other date that may be significant to the veteran. Similarly, the VRB will ensure that hearings for vulnerable veterans are not listed on or around these days.

Immediate threats

If there is an imminent threat at any point in the review process, Registry staff may contact the relevant arm of emergency services in order that a welfare check be undertaken.

Additionally, Registry staff will also notify the Department of Veterans' Affairs security team with a view to an incident assessment being undertaken.

Support services

The VRB will encourage any vulnerable veteran to seek appropriate counselling or other support services after a hearing, or will recommend to the veteran's advocate that such services be sought. In locations where the VRB is co–located near Open Arms, Registry staff, where appropriate, will endeavour to arrange an immediate referral or support.

Obtaining evidence

Types of evidence

The VRB commonly receives the following types of evidence:

- Medical evidence: including service medical records, hospital notes or surgery reports and doctors' expert opinions.
- Documentary evidence: including service records, unit diaries or other published historical or contemporary accounts of events that took place during service.
- Witness statements: including those of fellow service personnel who can confirm the details of incident/s, participation in a sporting activities/occupations, or postings or deployments.
- The veteran's own story that describes the details of the disability, incident, or service event. The veteran's own personal story is often the most important evidence the VRB receives.

It may be new evidence that the Department did not have when the primary decision was made. A veteran's own story is often an important factor in the VRB making a favourable decision for a veteran. As such, the VRB encourages veterans to participate in their appeals by participating in dispute resolution events and attending VRB hearings.



How evidence is obtained

As is the case for many Tribunals, the VRB does not apply the strict rules of evidence. Rather, the VRB encourages the parties to obtain relevant and probative material in a manner that is informal, economical and quick. In order to avoid unreasonable costs to the parties and reduce the risk of unreasonable delay to the finalisation of veterans' applications, the VRB requests the parties to consider:

- Where appropriate, obtaining oral evidence from a doctor or specialist (who has reviewed the veteran) over the telephone during a hearing or dispute resolution conference, rather than requiring the veteran to undergo a further medical assessment and obtain a full medical report. The oral evidence can be confirmed in a follow up email following a dispute resolution outreach event.
- Where a medical report is required, the examination of the veteran is conducted by video or telephone conference, to avoid unnecessary travel, expense or delay.
- Witness statements provided by colleagues or other persons by email.
- The parties agreeing to obtain reports jointly, using a collaborative approach.

A veteran or representative is welcome to ask a Conference Registrar in a dispute resolution event (or Registry staff prior to a hearing) if evidence can be obtained via one of the ways noted above.

Assistance in obtaining your own evidence

Rather than asking the respondent to obtain material, it may be quicker and more economical for veterans to obtain their own medical evidence. It also gives the veteran more control over the choice of health professionals, location and timing of appointments, including the option of using tele-health where appropriate.

A veteran or representative is welcome to ask a Conference Registrar in a dispute resolution event for help in drafting a schedule of questions for a health professional. The schedule of questions can be included in the direction that is issued following the dispute resolution event.



Reimbursement for veterans

If a veteran chooses to obtain his or her own material for the purposes of the application, the DVA will reimburse the costs of obtaining medical evidence up to a maximum amount of $1000.00 per claimed condition.

Additionally, reimbursement of reasonable travelling expenses incurred in obtaining such medical evidence (and travelling expenses for those of an attendant) to a maximum of $500 may also be paid.

Complaints

During 2025-26, 0.4% of complaints were made for every application we resolved. Complaints remained low overall, with feedback continuing to inform improvements to the VRB's services.

	2024-25	2025-26
Applications finalised	3,505	3,499
Percentage of complaints per applications finalised	0.2%	0.4%

Compliments about our service

During 2025-26, 0.7% of compliments were made for every application we resolved. The VRB continued to monitor feedback to identify opportunities to strengthen its services.

	2024-25	2025-26
Applications finalised	3,505	3,499
Percentage of complaints per applications finalised	1.8%	0.7%

Engagement

We are committed to engaging with the broad range of external stakeholders.

By seeking feedback, we are able to continue to improve our services and build public trust and confidence in our decision-making.

The Principal Member and National Registrar met with a range of people and organisations in 2025-26, including the Secretary of the DVA and other members of the Repatriation Commission and Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission.

In addition, the Principal Member and National Registrar continued liaison with stakeholders across Australia and attended and presented at various events hosted by ex–service organisations.

The Principal Member and National Registrar also conducted a series of VRB stakeholder forums, including forums focusing on the Government's legislative reforms.



Feedback about our service

User feedback

We regularly ask our users to evaluate the level of service we provide and seek their views on how we can improve. Recent feedback to the VRB has included some of the following comments:

"I am writing to provide positive feedback regarding the management of my review by the Veterans' Review Board. Throughout the Online Dispute Resolution process, I found the handling of my matter to be timely, clear, and professional. The communication was easy to follow and the overall process was conducted with fairness and respect. I particularly appreciated the efficient use of the ODR pathway, which allowed my application to be considered thoroughly without the need for unnecessary delay or formality. The approach taken gave me confidence that my circumstances and evidence were carefully reviewed. Thank you to the Conference Registrar, Senior Member, and all staff involved for their professionalism and considerate management of my review. I am grateful that the staff were kind and helpful with any questions I had during this process."

"Thank you to the Board and registry staff for their thorough consideration of this matter."

"I truly appreciate the professionalism and dedication shown by you and all the staff at the VRB. Your work has made a meaningful difference...."

"I'm writing to express my sincere thanks for the Veteran Review Board's decision regarding my case. This is a significant moment for me, and I truly appreciate the support throughout this process."

"I would like to extend my sincere thanks ....for the exceptional support and guidance throughout my experience with the Veterans' Review Board process. Navigating such a lengthy and challenging claim was made significantly more manageable through their patience, professionalism, and unwavering support."

"Please pass on my consideration to the board members for their timely review. It is appreciated."

"I thank the board member for the draft decision and their consideration. I am also very grateful to the broader team for both the support and guidance I have received."

"I appreciate the promptness and hard work by the VRB....."

A guide for self-represented veterans and representatives

The VRB offers a guide for self-represented veterans and representatives. The guide is designed to provide information to applicants who may not have a representative, as well as representatives who assist veterans and their families through the VRB review process.

The guide provides information on:

- what type of applications can be reviewed by the VRB
- what it means to be 'self-represented'
- stages in the process and what happens at each stage; and
- documents the parties need to provide.



MANAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY





Our governance

Senior Management

We were originally established by the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986* (Cth) and now continue by virtue under the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004*. This is the principal law that governs our operations. Under this law, the Principal Member is responsible for ensuring the expeditious and efficient discharge of our business and for managing the administrative affairs of the VRB. The National Registrar assists the Principal Member in managing our administrative affairs.

Risk management

Risk management is an integral part of delivering services to veterans and being accountable. We apply DVA's Risk Management Framework to identify and manage strategic and operational risks. Further information in relation to risk management can be found in the DVA Annual Report.

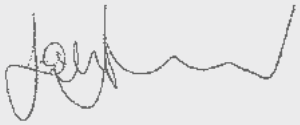
Fraud control

We are committed to preventing, detecting and dealing with fraud in relation to our operations. We apply the Commonwealth's Fraud and Corruption Control System 2025-2026 in line with the Department's Fraud and Corruption Control Strategy Statement and policies. Fraud and corruption control awareness forms part of the induction program for new staff and members. Staff participate in the DVA's online learning module on fraud control.

Certification of our fraud control arrangements

I, Jane Anderson, certify that the VRB:

- has fraud risk assessments and fraud control plans
- has in place appropriate mechanisms for preventing, detecting incidents of, investigating or otherwise dealing with, and recording or reporting fraud that meet the specific needs of the VRB, and
- has taken all reasonable measures to deal appropriately with fraud relating to the VRB.



Jane Anderson
Principal Member
2026

Maintaining ethical standards

We promote and encourage the maintenance of appropriate standards of ethical behaviour in a range of ways both for members and staff.

A Guide to Standards of Conduct for Tribunal Members, published by the Administrative Review Council provides guidance on appropriate conduct and professional behaviour for members.

Our staff are required to work in accordance with the APS Values, Employment Principles and Code of Conduct. Information relating to the APS ethical framework forms part of our induction process and ongoing awareness–raising activities are also undertaken. During the reporting year, specific APS Code of Conduct training was offered to all staff through the DVA.

Our people

Our members and staff are integral to our functions as a specialist, independent merits review tribunal. Our need for specialist expertise is met by the appointment of appropriately qualified and experienced members in the categories of Senior Member, Member and Services Member.

Overview of our members

At 30 June 2026, there were 38 members appointed to the VRB. A list of our members is set out below. The Principal Member and Senior Member Robert Douglass are the only full–time members of the VRB.

Name	First Appointment	Appointment expires	State
Principal Member			
Anderson, Jane Elizabeth	12 Nov 2015	30 Jan 2029	NSW
Senior Members			
Carlin, Evan	1 Oct 2014	12 Dec 2026	QLD
Desses, Mary	1 Jan 2019	12 Dec 2026	NSW
Douglass, Robert	1 Oct 2014	12 Dec 2026	VIC
Kelly, Michael	1 Jan 2019	12 Dec 2026	QLD
Letts, David	1 Jan 2019	12 Dec 2026	NSW
MacDonald, Amanda	1 Oct 2007	12 Dec 2026	NSW
McCusker, Peter	13 Dec 2023	12 Dec 2028	SA
O'Brien, Glenn	31 Mar 2022	30 Mar 2027	QLD
O'Shea, Gerard	13 Dec 2023	12 Dec 2028	VIC
Smith, Raymond	13 Dec 2023	12 Dec 2028	WA
Wyatt, Neville	12 Nov 2015	12 Dec 2026	NSW
Services Members			
Bornholt, Mark	1 Jan 2011	12 Dec 2026	ACT
Carrigan, Catherine	19 Jul 2018	12 Dec 2026	VIC
Coghlan, Steven	1 Jan 2019	12 Dec 2026	WA
Date, William	13 Dec 2023	12 Dec 2028	QLD
Hill, Mark	13 Dec 2023	12 Dec 2028	NSW
Jugowitz, Katie	13 Dec 2023	12 Dec 2028	SA
Karlovic, Mark	13 Dec 2023	12 Dec 2028	VIC
Kelly, Mark	31 Mar 2022	30 Mar 2027	ACT
Kirton, John	13 Dec 2023	12 Dec 2028	NSW
Mather, Jodi	13 Dec 2023	12 Dec 2028	NT
McConachie, Vicki	31 Mar 2022	30 Mar 2027	QLD

Name	First Appointment	Appointment expires	State
Roberts, Francis	13 Dec 2023	12 Dec 2026	QLD
Rogers, Felicity	31 Mar 2022	30 Mar 2027	NSW
White, Sophia	1 Jan 2019	12 Dec 2026	NSW
Members			
Bragg, Anthony	31 Mar 2022	30 Mar 2027	QLD
Dowsing, Brett	31 Mar 2022	30 Mar 2027	WA
Gill, Gerard	31 Mar 2022	30 Mar 2027	VIC
Glover, Ross	31 Mar 2022	30 Mar 2027	NSW
Hunt, Louise	12 Nov 2015	12 Dec 2026	WA
Jithoo, Rondhir	13 Dec 2023	12 Dec 2028	VIC
Morgan-Short, Kim	31 Mar 2022	30 Mar 2027	QLD
Newman, Troy	13 Dec 2023	12 Dec 2028	QLD
Nottle, Joshua	31 Mar 2022	30 Mar 2027	NSW
Seefeld, Scott	31 Mar 2022	30 Mar 2027	QLD
Skidmore, Mark	13 Dec 2023	12 Dec 2028	ACT





Overview of our staff

At 30 June 2026, 26 full-time equivalent staff members had been made available to the VRB by the Secretary of the DVA. Our staff are based in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane.

Job Classification	NSW Staff	QLD Staff
APS Level 4	4 + 1 in Melbourne	6
APS Level 5	2	1
APS Level 6	1	1
Executive Level 1	5 + 1 in Melbourne	3
Executive Level 2	1	0

Employment agreements and arrangements for staff

At 30 June 2026, all on-going staff were covered by the DVA Enterprise Agreement. Salary ranges available to staff which are set out in the agreement are noted below:

Job Classification	Salary Range	Salary Range
APS Level 4	$85,610	$91,301
APS Level 5	$95,440	$99,461
APS Level 6	$104,898	$119,116
Executive Level 1	$131,960	$144,908
Executive Level 2	$159,145	$179,125

Strengthen workforce diversity

We are committed to reflecting the diversity of the Australian community in our workforce and building an inclusive culture in which employee backgrounds, skills and views enrich our working environment and quality of work. Strengthening workforce diversity includes developing a supportive and inclusive culture. We have contributed to and apply in our recruitment strategies, DVA's *Diversity Strategy, Gender Equity Action Plan 2022–26, Disability and Employment Strategy 2021–25, Gurru Ngali: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy 2020–24* and *APS Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Employment Strategy and Action Plan.*

In implementing the Diversity Strategy we have ensured a range of flexible working arrangements are available to our staff to effectively balance their work, family, caring, other responsibilities and interests. Our flexible working arrangements for staff, include part–time and all staff have access to home based work.

We value diversity in the workplace and at the end of the reporting year 73% of the VRB's staff and 28.9% of our members were women, with strong representation across all classification levels.

Principal Member	**Number**	**%**
Female	1	100%
Male	0	
TOTAL	1	100%
Senior Member	**Number**	**%**
Female	2	18.1%
Male	9	81.9%
TOTAL	11	100%
Services Member	**Number**	**%**
Female	6	40%
Male	9	60%
TOTAL	15	100%
Member	**Number**	**%**
Female	2	18.1%
Male	9	81.9%
TOTAL	11	100%
Staff	**Number**	**%**
Female	19	73%
Male	7	27%
TOTAL	**26**	**100%**

Work health and safety

We are committed to providing and maintaining a safe and healthy work environment through cooperative, consultative relationships. We apply the DVA's established work health and safety (WHS) strategies and systems that promote continuous WHS improvement and a positive safety culture.

In the reporting year, we participated in regular workplace hazard inspections conducted jointly by managers and trained workplace health and safety representatives. Our staff were also able to access DVA sponsored training programs including Accidental Counselling, Mental Health First Aid, Planning and Managing Change and Domestic and Family Violence Awareness. Staff were also able to access annual flu vaccinations, subsidies for eyeglasses and fitness equipment and ergonomic workstation assessments.

More broadly, members and staff are also able to access VRB specific and external training programs that are designed to promote a healthy culture for mental and physical wellbeing.

Notifiable incidents and investigations

No notifiable incidents arising out of the conduct of our operations occurred in the reporting year.



Skilled to deliver justice

Building Capability to Deliver High-Quality, Specialist Services

Ensuring our people have the skills, knowledge and support needed to deliver high-quality merits review services remained a priority in 2025–26. This was particularly important as the VRB implemented significant changes to its operating environment, including direct lodgement and the transition of DRCA matters to the Single Review Pathway. Professional development activities supported members and staff to respond effectively to these changes while maintaining the quality and accessibility of the VRB's services.

Targeted Skills Development for Members and Staff

Our online Learn and Connect program continued to provide regular professional development opportunities throughout the year, with sessions drawing on the expertise of VRB members, staff and external specialists.

Members and conference registrars also participated in external professional development opportunities, including seminars and events hosted by the Law Council of Australia, Council of Australasian Tribunals and relevant professional bodies. These opportunities supported ongoing development of specialist skills and knowledge relevant to the VRB's work.

Members and staff continued to have access to shared resources, including templates, publications, presentations and legal updates, supporting consistent approaches and keeping our people informed of legislative and legal developments.

Feedback from members and staff continued to inform the development of learning and professional development activities, ensuring these remained relevant to the VRB's changing operational and jurisdictional requirements.

Registry Staff

All staff participated in a structured performance management program. This included setting clear performance agreements outlining role capabilities, behavioural expectations, and personal learning priorities.

Additionally, staff benefited from a Studies Assistance Scheme, providing financial support and study leave for vocational and tertiary education, helping build both individual and organisational capability.

Fostering a United Culture Focused on Justice

Throughout the year, the VRB continued to foster a collaborative and supportive workplace culture focused on delivering high-quality services to veterans and their families. Regular staff meetings, team activities and opportunities for collaboration supported communication, knowledge-sharing and connection across the organisation.

The VRB's hybrid work model continued to balance flexibility with opportunities for meaningful in-person collaboration, supporting strong team connections while enabling staff to work effectively across different locations.

Progress and Productivity Improvements

The VRB maintained a strong focus on improving productivity and progressing applications towards resolution throughout 2025–26. The VRB finalised 3,499 applications, closely maintaining the previous year's result of 3,505 finalisations, while managing significant reform activity and a substantial caseload. The improvement in the VRB's clearance rate reflects continued attention to case management, case progression and the effective use of member and Registry resources.

Digital improvements, changes to case management practices and continued support for members and conference registrars contributed to the VRB's capacity to manage its workload and support timely resolution of applications.

Purchasing

We can access the support provided by the Department's Contract Advisory Unit in relation to procurement and contracting activities in accordance with the Commonwealth Procurement Framework.

Consultants

We may engage consultants where independent research or short–term projects are required; or for specialist knowledge or skills that are not available within the VRB. During the reporting year, we did not enter into any consultancy contracts.

AusTender

Annual reports contain information about actual expenditure on contracts for consultancies. Information on the estimated value of contracts and consultancies is available on the AusTender website: www.tenders.gov.au.

Financial Information

Although the VRB is an independent statutory tribunal, it is not a separate Commonwealth entity under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*. Rather, the VRB is considered a Secondary Statutory Structure, receiving funding and corporate services from DVA. As a result, the VRB does not have a budget allocation in the Portfolio Budget Statements.

In 2025–26, the VRB operated within a budget of $5.348 million, representing a decrease of $160,000 (2.9%) compared with expenditure of $5.508 million in 2024–25. This outcome reflects the VRB's ongoing commitment to efficient resource management while maintaining strong finalisation rates and progressing significant reform initiatives alongside its core merits review functions.

The largest component of operating expenditure during the reporting year was payroll costs for members and registry staff supporting the direct delivery of VRB services. Travel expenditure was 69.6% lower than in 2024-25, reflecting the ongoing use of virtual hearings and associated reductions in travel requirements.

Table 14: Veterans' Review Board Expenditure

	2024-25 ($'000)	2025-26 ($'000)
Salaries (includes superannuation)		
F/T Members/Executives	1,070	864
Sessional Members	1,353	1,826
Staff (includes o/time & temps)	2,609	2,527
TOTAL	**5,032**	**5,217**
Travel (includes fares, accommodation and allowances)	168	51
Supplies and services		
Printing, postage, stationery and other office expenses	35	30
Communication and couriers	5	14
External training	15	4
Advertising	0	0
IT	253	32
TOTAL	**476**	**131**
GRAND TOTAL	**5,508**	**5,348**

APPENDIX 1

Membership Biographies

Ms Jane Anderson

Ms Jane Anderson was appointed by the Governor-General as Principal Member of the Veterans' Review Board (VRB), commencing in the role in January 2018. Ms Anderson is in her third term as Principal Member, and also served previously as a part-time sessional member of the VRB.

Ms Anderson is a lawyer of 25 years' experience, including as a former Senior Member of the NSW Civil & Administrative Tribunal (NCAT) and a former Deputy President of the South Australian Guardianship Board, where she presided over legal proceedings involving people with serious mental illness and impaired decision-making capacity.

As well as her expertise in administrative law, Ms Anderson previously practised in criminal law, enjoying a career as a senior lawyer with the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions, during which she appeared as prosecuting counsel in criminal courts and provided legal advice to government agencies.

Ms Anderson has a strong interest in human rights and access to justice. She holds a Master of Law degree in international law from Cambridge University, UK, and has served as an officer of the National Executive of the Australian Institute of Administrative Law and the NSW Law Society Human Rights Committee. Ms Anderson is a former Acting Chair and current member of the Military Law Committee of the Law Council of Australia. She is an Advisory Board member of the Access to Justice and Legal Aid Committee and Co-Chair of the Forum for Government and Public Lawyers of the International Bar Association, a global organisation of legal practitioners, bar associations and law societies.

Brigadier Mark Bornholt (Retd)

Brigadier Mark Bornholt (retd) graduated from Officer School Portsea in 1978. He served in the 3rd and 6th Battalions of the Royal Australian Regiment. He was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia for his leadership of the 1st Battalion and was commended for distinguished service during the war against Iraq. His senior appointments included Chief of Staff Land Headquarters and Commandant Royal Military College of Australia. He retired in 2009 and worked as the CEO of a business unit of a publicly listed company until 2014 when he was appointed to the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal. He remains a Chief of Army delegate for Redress of Grievance issues, a Director of the Royal Australian Regiment Foundation and is the Colonel Commandant of the Australian Army Band Corps. He previously served as a Services Member of the VRB in 2010–2011.

Doctor Anthony Bragg

Doctor Anthony Bragg is a Geriatrician and Stroke Physician and currently works as the Director of Rehabilitation and Geriatric Medicine at St. Vincent's Hospital in Lismore.

He has research interests in Stroke and Dementia and has a close interest in Veterans health in the Northern Rivers community. Prior to his medical career, Dr Bragg worked in corporate roles, including as a Management Consultant with the Boston Consulting Group and as a Group Manager with Boral Energy. He holds bachelor degrees in Science and Commerce as well as post-graduate degrees in Medicine and Business Administration.

Colonel Evan Carlin

Colonel Evan Carlin is a retired regular Army Legal Officer. He served as Chief Legal Officer at HQ Land Command, the Deployable Joint Force Headquarters, Joint Operations Command and, latterly, at Command Legal Officer Forces Command. Mr Carlin also served as an exchange at HQ Land in the UK and as Aide-de-camp (ADC) to the Judge Advocate General of the ADF. He has operational service in NATO, the Balkans (Kosovo), Iraq and Indonesia. He has been a Senior Member since 2015.

Colonel Catherine Carrigan

Colonel Catherine (Bunny) Carrigan is a business consultant, Board Director and senior Army Reserve Officer. She was appointed a VRB Services Member in 2018. Ms Carrigan has served in the Australian Army (Regular and Reserve) for 40 years. She is a logistics officer with a breadth of ADF experience including operational service in Somalia, the Middle East and on domestic operations. She holds a Bachelor of Applied Science, Masters of Defence Studies, Masters of Business, and Australian Institute of Company Directors Diploma.

Mr Steven Coghlan

Mr Steven Coghlan served as an Army Signals Officer from 1998 to 2006 during which time he saw service in Bougainville and Pakistan. Since transitioning he has held senior management positions within both the telecommunications and broader infrastructure sectors. He is a graduate of both the Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA) and Royal Military College — Duntroon (RMC–D) and holds a Bachelor's degree in Politics (UNSW), a Master's degree in International Relations (Macq) and Diplomas in Business, Personnel Management and Administration.

Brigadier William Robert Date ADC

Brigadier William Robert Date ADC graduated from the Officer Cadet School, Portsea in 1980 and has served in the Army as a regular and active reservist. He currently writes joint doctrine for the Headquarters Joint Operations Command. His command appointments include 11th Brigade and 2nd Combat Engineer Regiment. His operational service includes Bougainville, Iraq and Afghanistan.

He was the Chief Inspector Petroleum and Gas from 2016-2024 responsible to regulate safety and health in Queensland's gas industry including safe coal seam gas production and fracking operations. Mr Date holds a Master of Business Administration degree and other qualifications.

Ms Mary Desses

Ms Mary Desses was appointed as a Member of the Veterans' Review Board commencing 1 January 2019 and then as a Senior Member commencing 31 March 2022. She holds a Bachelor of Arts from Griffith University, a Bachelor of Laws from the University of New South Wales, a Graduate Diploma of Adult Education, and a Vocational Graduate Diploma of Family Dispute Resolution. She was admitted as a solicitor in 1992.

Ms Desses worked as an Associate for two Federal Court judges, a Mediation Officer at the Retail Tenancy Disputes Unit, an advocate for the Repatriation Commission and a Conference Registrar at the Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

Ms Desses is a mediator with over 20 years' experience as an Alternative Dispute Resolution practitioner.

Major Robert Douglass

Major Robert Douglass holds Bachelor degrees in Economics and Laws from Monash University and a Masters degree in Arts (Military History) from the Australian Defence Force Academy.

He joined the Department of Veterans' Affairs in 1993 and was an Assistant–Director in the Rehabilitation and Compensation Group from 1995 to 2010, before working as a Senior Lawyer in the Legal Services Group from 2010 to 2014. Mr Douglass has served as a Legal Officer in the Australian Army from 2007 and remains an active member of the Reserve. He was appointed a Member of the VRB in 2014 and a Senior Member in 2015.

Commodore Brett Dowsing JP RAN (Retd)

Commodore Brett Dowsing JP RAN (Retd) is a career naval officer with 51 years' permanent and reserve service. He qualified as a seaman officer and a helicopter pilot, and has had sea, air and shore commands across all officer ranks held. Recognition has included Vietnam and counterterrorist service along with international duties including in the USA, Republic of Korea, Mongolia and Timor-Leste. Brett serves on several veterans' related boards from Perth, WA and commenced duties with the VRB, this year.

Clinical Professor Gerard Gill RFD MBBS PhD FRACGP FAFPHM FARGP

Clinical Professor Gerard Gill RFD MBBS PhD FRACGP FAFPHM FARGP is the retired Professor of General Practice at Deakin University. He spent 37 years as an Army Reserve Medical Officer, deployed to the MEAO in 2008 and has a long involvement with caring for veterans and on DVA committees.

Mr Ross Glover

Mr Ross Glover commenced practice at the NSW Bar in 2010, and has a varied practice including in the fields of administrative law, sporting tribunals, commercial law, insurance and Commonwealth criminal law. Since 2008 he has been a reserve legal officer in the Royal Australian Navy and in 2022, he was appointed as a member of the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal sitting in the Consumer and Commercial Division.

Rear Admiral Mark Hill AM CSC RAN

Rear Admiral Mark Hill AM CSC RAN joined the Royal Australian Navy in 1980 where he served for 42 years. During his career he enjoyed Command appointments at sea and ashore and Operational service in East Timor, Afghanistan and Iraq. His senior Command appointments include Joint Task Force 633, Maritime Border Command and Joint Agency Task Force Operation Sovereign Borders. He was appointed to the VRB as a Services Member in February 2024.

Group Captain Louise Hunt

Group Captain Louise Hunt is a graduate in Law and holds a postgraduate Master of International Law. She entered private practice as a solicitor in 1983 and joined the Royal Australian Air Force Reserve Legal Panel in 1984. From 2007 to 2021 she was a Panel Leader for the Royal Australian Air Force Specialist Reserve Legal Panel. As an Assistant Inspector General of the Australian Defence Force, Ms Hunt conducts complex inquiries and leads teams conducting military justice audits at Australian Defence Force establishments. Ms Hunt was appointed as a Services Member in 2015 and a Senior Member in 2019.

Dr Rondhir Jithoo

Dr Ron Jithoo is a Neurosurgeon of 25 years' experience. He completed his medical degree in South Africa with the Dean's commendation. Neurosurgical training was done at the Royal Melbourne Hospital, and he has worked as a neurological consultant at the Royal Melbourne, the Alfred and Royal Darwin hospitals.

He is an Adjunct Research Fellow of Monash University through the National Trauma Research Institute. He has been elected to the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons court of examiners for Neurosurgery and is currently the secretary of the Board of Neurosurgery of Australasia.

He is a past acting head of the department of Neurosurgery of the Alfred Hospital from 2015 to 2017.

He is currently an active specialist reservist at the RAAF with the Rank of Wing Commander, attached to No. 1 Expeditionary Health Squadron based at Amberley. He has deployed on Operation Okra to the Middle East region as principal Neurosurgeon Forward Surgical Group. He has received a meritorious unit citation of the US Army in addition to the OSM (MER) and ADM.

He is also a qualified aviation medical officer from the RAAF Institute of Aviation Medicine.

Ms Katie Jugowitz

Ms Katie Jugowitz is a graduate of the Australian Defence Force Academy and the Royal Military College, Duntroon. She spent 11 years offering full-time service, including with the 2nd Reconstruction Task Force in Afghanistan and the Army Aboriginal Community Assistance Program. She has a Bachelor of Science, a Master of Business Administration and a Graduate Diploma of Counselling and Psychotherapy.

Lieutenant Commander Mark Karlovic RAN

Lieutenant Commander Mark Karlovic RAN joined the Royal Australian Navy as a Reservist Legal Officer in 2010. His military career to date has seen him work in a range of positions including at Fleet Legal, HMAS Cerberus as the Command Legal Officer, Maritime Border Command, Defence People Group and Headquarters Joint Operations Command as well as serving on a range of warships.

In his civilian career he has worked as a senior Human Resources Executive with a range of ASX listed, Multinational and smaller organisations for over 20 years. Mr Karlovic holds a Master of Commerce, Bachelor of Laws, and Master of Military Law.

Mr Karlovic was appointed to the VRB in 2024 as a Services Member.

Major General Mark Kelly AO DSC

Major General Mark Kelly AO DSC graduated from the Royal Military College in 1978 and served in the Army for 36 years as an Infantry officer. His senior command appointments include: 1st Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment; 3rd Brigade; 1st Division; Land Command Australia; and Joint Task Force 633. His operational service includes: Zimbabwe/ Rhodesia, East Timor, Iraq and Afghanistan. He also served as the Repatriation Commissioner from July 2010 until June 2019. He was appointed to the VRB as a Services Member in March 2022.

Mr Michael (Mike) Kelly

Mr Mike Kelly is currently an Active Reservist holding the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. He holds Bachelor degrees in Arts and Laws and a Graduate Diploma in Management. He is an admitted legal practitioner and a senior lawyer within an incorporated legal practice. He joined the Australian Army in 1986 and has held a range of RAAC regimental, and staff appointments. His service includes operational service in the Middle East Area of Operations.

Mr John Kirton

Mr John Kirton served over 17 years in the full time Air Force. Initially joining as a navigator, after conducting one tour on the C-130H Hercules he transferred to pilot then returned to fly the C-130. In 2015 he then brought the C-27J Spartan into service. Mr Kirton was posted to 36 & 37SQNs during a very busy period that saw him involved in numerous operations such as the 2004 Boxing Day Tsunami, Timor, Solomons and of course multiple tours of Iraq and Afghanistan. Mr Kirton now owns and runs multiple businesses in Sydney and is also the President of the Kirribilli RSL Sub-branch.

Associate Professor David Letts AM CSM RAN

Associate Professor David Letts AM CSM RAN completed more than 30 years of fulltime service in the RAN at the end of 2012. During his military career Mr Letts worked as supply officer and a legal officer, as well as holding senior appointments in Navy and Defence. He is now the Director of the ANU College of Law's Centre for Military and Security Law where his academic teaching and research interests centre on the application of the law to all aspects of military legal practice.

Ms Amanda MacDonald

Ms Amanda MacDonald has extensive experience working in Commonwealth Administrative Review Tribunals. She was a Member, Senior Member and the Deputy Principal Member of the Migration Review Tribunal and the Refugee Review Tribunal, a member of the Social Security Appeals Tribunal, a member of the Superannuation Complaints Tribunal and a Conference Registrar and District Registrar of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. Ms MacDonald is currently contracted to the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry to design and implement changes to the Commonwealth biosecurity system. She is also contracted to undertake reviews for the Merit Protection Commissioner. Ms MacDonald holds a Bachelor of Science and a Masters in Administrative Law and Policy from the University of Sydney. She was first appointed to the Veterans' Review Board in 2007 as a Senior Member and again as a Member from 2018 and a Senior Member from 2022.

Wing Commander Jodi Mather

Wing Commander Jodi Mather is a legal practitioner in the Northern Territory (NT) with 20 years post admission experience. She was the former Associate to Chief Justice Brian Frank Martin (dec'd), Prosecutor within the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and Senior Adult Guardianship Officer with the Office of the Public Guardian. Ms Mather currently practices in litigation, possessing an extensive background in Royal Commissions and Inquiries. She holds a current appointment as Legal Member of the NT Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

Ms Mather was commissioned as a Specialist Reservist Legal Officer to the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) in 2006 and appointed Head of Panel to the Northern Territory Tri-Service Legal Panel upon being promoted to Wing Commander in 2019. She holds a current appointment as Legal Member of the NT Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

Ms Mather also serves as an ADC to His Honour Professor The Honourable Hugh Heggie, Administrator of the Northern Territory.

Commodore Vicki McConachie

Commodore Vicki McConachie served in the permanent Navy from 1984 to 2012 undertaking senior roles in both a legal and non-legal capacity, including serving in Iraq. She has served in the reserve since 2012. After leaving the permanent force she served as a non-executive director for Defence Housing Australia. From 2012 until 2020 she served as Chief General Counsel to a Commonwealth government entity. She currently reviews and undertakes complex investigations for the Inspector General ADF among other reserve service. She holds Bachelor's degrees in Arts and Law and a Masters degree in law.

Mr Peter McCusker

Mr Peter McCusker has been appointed to the Board for 5 years from December 2023.

From 1988, he served as a Judge in the District Court of South Australia. From 1990 he also served as a Judge in the Industrial Court of South Australia and the Industrial Commission of South Australia. He was appointed a Deputy President of the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission in 1991. He has served as a Deputy President of the Workers Compensation Tribunal from 1995. On the establishment of the South Australian Employment Tribunal in 2015, he was appointed its first President. He served as the Presidential member on a number of administrative tribunals including the Police Promotions Appeals Tribunal, the Teachers Appeal Board, the Firefighters Disciplinary Appels Tribunal and the Public Sector Appeals Tribunal.

Before his appointment to the Judiciary, he practiced as a barrister mainly in the areas of administrative law, employment and industrial law, workers compensation and personal injuries law. He appears as such in all jurisdictions, including the High Court. He is a graduate of Adelaide University (LLB).

Dr (Squadron Leader) Kim Morgan-Short

Dr (Squadron Leader) Kim Morgan-Short is a medical practitioner who has had a varied career working in many locations around the world, such as the UK, Ireland and Saudi Arabia. She has been an RAAF Reservist for 30 years and has operational service in the Middle East. She also has a Graduate Certificate in Law and a Post Graduate Diploma in Law (Medical Law and Ethics). Much of her working life has been spent as both a uniformed medical officer and a civilian doctor on military bases.

Unfortunately she is a War Widow having lost her first pilot husband in an RAAF F111 crash and also a Legacy Widow having lost her second husband to cancer whilst he was a serving pilot in the RAAF. Her son is also a RAAF pilot. Dr Morgan-Short currently works at Defence Force Recruiting doing medical assessments and she was a former Board Member of Australian War Widows QLD.

Mr Troy Newman

Mr Troy Newman is a barrister in private practice. He holds a Bachelor of Science from Griffith University and a Bachelor of Laws from Queensland University of Technology. Prior to his legal career, Mr Newman was a Queensland Police Officer for 24 years specialising in investigative and prosecutorial roles. Mr Newman was an Army Reserve Military Police member from 2000 – 2002.

Mr Newman serves on the Councillor Conduct Tribunal (QLD) and was appointed as a Member of the VRB in 2023.

Mr Joshua Nottle

Mr Joshua Nottle is a barrister in private practice. He has a Bachelor of Laws, Graduate Diploma in Military Law and a Master of Laws from the Australian National University. He served full-time in the Royal Australian Navy from 2003 as a Legal Officer before transferring to the Reserves and commencing practice as a barrister in 2017. He was appointed as a Member of the VRB in 2022.

Lieutenant Colonel Glenn O'Brien

Lieutenant Colonel Glenn O'Brien is a partner in a law firm and a part-time member of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. He was a member and Legal Officer of the Australian Regular Army and holds a Master of Defence Studies.

Lieutenant Colonel Gerard O'Shea

Lieutenant Colonel Gerard O'Shea joined the Army in 1999. He has served in the regular and reserve forces as an infantry officer and legal officer. He has served on operations in Australia, East Timor, Iraq and Afghanistan. He holds postgraduate degrees in Law and Military Studies, and he is a fellow of the Australian Institute of Community Directors. Mr O'Shea works in private practice as a lawyer and management consultant.

Major General Francis Roberts AO (Retd)

Major General Francis Roberts AO (Retd) served as an Army Officer from 1970 to 2005. He then held a Senior Executive Service position in the Department of Defence from 2005 until 2013 before undertaking private consultancy work until his retirement in 2014. Mr Roberts has graduated with a Bachelor of Civil Engineering, Master of Science and Graduate Diploma in Management Studies.

Captain Felicity Rogers RAN

Captain Felicity Rogers RAN joined the Royal Australian Navy as a full time legal officer in 1994. Her postings included Fleet Headquarters and Deployable Joint Force Headquarters – Maritime. She deployed to Dili, East Timor as a legal adviser to HQINTERFET in 1999. She transferred to the Navy Reserve in 2001, when she was admitted as a barrister at the NSW Bar, where she continues to practise.

Ms Rogers holds a Bachelor's degree in both law and politics and a Masters degree in International Law. She is also a registered counsellor.

Mr Scott Seefeld

Mr Scott Seefeld is a barrister in private practice in Brisbane. He holds Bachelor degrees in Science and Law, and Masters degrees in Business Administration and Engineering Science. Prior to his legal career, Mr Seefeld was an RAE officer in the Australian Army. He is a graduate of the Australian Defence Force Academy and the Royal Military College – Duntroon. He has over 25 years' service as both a regular and reserve officer, including operational service in East Timor in 1999 and 2000. Since 2019, he has continued to serve as a legal officer in the RAAF Specialist Reserve.

Air Vice Marshal Mark Skidmore AM BSc Grad Dip Mil Ac FRAeS tp (Retd)

Air Vice Marshal (retd) Mark Skidmore AM BSc Grad Dip Mil Ac FRAeS tp (Retd) is Chairman of Skykraft, Chairman of Seitec, Director of Swift Aerospace Consulting Pty Ltd and also provides support to the International Test Pilot Canada and the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Reserves. Mr Skidmore is a fellow of the RaeS and past President of the Australian division.

Mr Skidmore has more than 30 years' experience in both civilian and military aviation. Mr Skidmore had an outstanding military aviation career, beginning as an F-111 pilot in the RAAF in the early 1980s. A qualified test pilot, he led RAAF research and development squadrons and was promoted to Australia's Air Commander, holding oversight for Australia's air operations, and reached the rank of Air Vice Marshal before retiring in 2012. Mr Skidmore has also worked in civilian aviation as Director of Aviation Safety and CEO, Civil Aviation Safety Authority, and as a test pilot and business development manager. He has led large teams of operational, technical and administrative support staff providing leadership for operational, training and support functions.

In 2007 Mr Skidmore was awarded a Commendation for Distinguished Service for distinguished performance of duties in warlike operations as the Director of the Coalition Combined Air Operations Centre in the Middle East Area of Operations. In 2010 Mr Skidmore was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia in recognition of his exceptional service as the Air Commander Australia and in a range of other senior appointments.

Today Mr Skidmore is part of the general aviation community owning and regularly flying a Globe Swift GC-1B aircraft and an ex-RAAF CT4A.

Mr Raymond Smith

Mr Ray Smith served full-time in the RAAF from 1990 to 2010 as an Intelligence Officer. He saw active service in the Middle East, including as a contingent commanding officer in Iraq. He also served as the Australian Liaison Officer to the United Nations Command and Assistant Defence Attaché in Korea.

After leaving the full-time ADF, he worked for the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva and Kabul, and as a barrister in Victoria and the UK. He has experience as a social security tribunal judge in the UK and as a workers' compensation arbitrator in WA. He is currently a full-time member of the Australian Administrative Appeals Tribunal and a part-time RAN legal officer. He is a graduate of the Australian Command & Staff College, and has Bachelor's degrees in politics and law, and Master's degrees in business administration, international relations, and strategy and policy.

Mr Scott Warr

Mr Scott Warr is an Army Officer who served for 22 years in the Regular Army and continues to serve in the Reserves. He is a highly effective and capable senior executive leader with a track record for delivering results. He has over 30 years of broad experience in the military, private and public sectors in Australia and overseas. His most recent experience was as national CEO of Legacy Australia Incorporated and Acting CEO of RSL NSW. He was recently appointed a Trustee on the RAAC Colonel John Haynes Trust and is currently the President of the Terrigal-Wamberal RSL sub-branch in NSW.

He brings significant capability and experience in all aspects of the charities and NFP sector, finance and investments, human resource management, and emergency and business continuity management.

Mr Warr was appointed to the VRB as a Services Member in December 2023.

Commander Sophia White RAN

Commander Sophia White RAN served in the Royal Australian Navy for 16 years, full time, transferring to the Active Reserves in 2018. She has operational experience in Afghanistan, on border protection operations, in Headquarters Joint Operations Command and served as the Fleet Legal Officer in 2017. She is a lawyer and holds postgraduate qualifications including a Master of Laws (Maritime Law) and Master of Military and Defence Studies. She is a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

Commander Neville Wyatt RFD RAN

Commander Neville Wyatt RFD RAD served full–time in the Royal Australian Navy from 1981 to 1993. Since then he has continued to serve with the Royal Australian Navy Reserve. He is a graduate in Law and Communications. Since 1993 he has been in practice as a private solicitor. In 1999, he started up his own successful firm now known as Wyatts Lawyers and Advisors, which he continues to run with his legal practitioner wife.

APPENDIX 2

Advertising and market research

We did not commission any press advertising or market research in 2025-26.

Grants

We did not administer any grants programs in 2025-26.

Ecologically sustainable development and environmental performance

The VRB does not develop or administer legislation or policy relating to the environment but takes steps to ensure our operations are environmentally sustainable. We work closely with DVA who provides our accommodation to ensure compliance with a range of Australian Government policies, including the Energy Efficiency in Government Operations Policy and the National Waste Policy.

More information can be found in DVA's Annual Report.

We also limit our impact on the environment in day–to–day operations by implementing simple measures such as ensuring lights and electrical devices are switched off when not required, encouraging double–sided printing, providing facilities to support staff who walk or cycle to work, and recycling office waste.



APPENDIX 3

Glossary

ADF	Australian Defence Force.
ADR	Alternative Dispute Resolution.
ART	Administrative Review Tribunal.
ADR processes	Procedures and services for the resolution of disputes, which includes outreach, conferencing, neutral evaluation and case appraisal.
AD(JR) Act	*Administrative Decisions (Judicial Review) Act 1977*
Adjournment	Suspension of a hearing.
Applicant	A person or body that has applied for a review (to the VRB or ART), or applied for an allowance or increase in pension (to DVA).
Applied provisions	Provisions of the VEA that set out the VRB's powers and functions, which are applied by s353 of the MRCA for the purpose of the VRB's review of an original determination under Part 4 of Chapter 8 of the MRCA.
Assessment matter	A case under the VEA concerning the assessment of the rate of disability compensation payment.
Assessment period	Period over which the decision–maker must assess the rate or rates of pension that were payable. It begins on the day the claim or AFI was lodged (the 'application day') and ends on the day the decision–maker determines the claim or AFI, or determines the review.

Attendant Allowance	A fortnightly allowance paid towards the cost of an attendant for a person needing such assistance and who has accepted disabilities involving one of a number of types of amputations or severe types of disability, or an injury or disease similar in effect or severity to a disease of the cerebro–spinal system.
Case Manager	VRB staff member who looks after the administrative matters concerning an application for review.
Claimant	A person who has made a claim for a pension (to DVA) or claim for acceptance of liability and/or compensation (to the MRCC).
CLIK	Consolidated Library of Information & Knowledge: a computer research tool for decision–makers and pension officers and representatives produced by DVA.
Conference	A meeting conducted by a VRB member or Conference Registrar with the applicant and/or their representatives as part of the ADR program. Conferences allow for discussion and clarification of issues, identification of further evidence that would assist to resolve the application, and consideration of whether the application can be settled without the need for a hearing.
Deledio	Repatriation Commission v Deledio (1998) 83 FCR 82. A Federal Court case that established a 4 step process by which the beyond reasonable doubt and reasonable hypothesis standard of satisfaction is to be applied in the context of cases to which the Statements of Principles regime applies.
Directions Hearing	A hearing conducted by either the Principal Member or a Senior Member of the VRB for the purpose of clarifying issues that are delaying the progress of an application.
DRCA	*Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-related Claims) Act 1988*.
DVA	Department of Veterans' Affairs.
Entitlement matter	A case under the VEA concerning whether an injury, disease, or death is war – or defence-caused.
ESO	Ex-service organisation.
FOI	Freedom of Information: the right to obtain documents from a Commonwealth Department or agency under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*.
Liability matter	A case under the MRCA concerning whether an injury, disease, or death is service–related.
Member	A member of the VRB appointed by the Governor–General.

MRCA	*Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004.*
MRCC	Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission.
Online Dispute Resolution	An applicant can lodge a request on the VRB Justice Portal for their application to be considered for Online Dispute Resolution.
Outreach	The first step in the ADR process is one mandatory outreach. The purpose of outreach is to explain VRB practices to unrepresented applicants and to give them an opportunity to consider representation. For all other cases, the purpose of an outreach is to discuss how the application will proceed before the Board.
Principal Member	The member of the VRB appointed by the Governor–General who is responsible for the national management of the VRB, and who must have legal qualifications.
Reconsideration	A new consideration or review of an original determination under s347 or s349 of the MRCA.
Registrar	VRB staff member who manages a State Registry of the VRB.
Registry	An office of a court, tribunal, or the VRB.
Respondent	A person or body against whom a claim, application, or appeal is brought; the party that responds to an application brought by an applicant.
s31 review	Review by a delegate of the Repatriation Commission.
s37 documents	Documents prepared by the decision–maker for the purpose of an ART review (also called 'T–documents').
S352D report	Documents prepared by DVA for the purpose of a VRB review.
S352H notice	A notice sent to an applicant by the VRB seeking advice concerning how or if the applicant will appear or be represented at the VRB hearing.
s352J(8) request	Request sent by a delegate of Principal Member to the Secretary of DVA seeking further investigation or documents.
s352P(1)(b) adjournment	Adjournment of a hearing by VRB usually at the applicant's request, but can be for any reason.
s352J(9) adjournment	Adjournment of a VRB hearing in order that the presiding member can ask the Secretary of DVA for further investigation or further documents.
s347 reconsideration	Reconsideration of an original determination by a delegate of the MRCC or a service chief at their own discretion.

s349 reconsideration	Reconsideration of an original determination by a delegate of the MRCC or a service chief at the request of a claimant. If such a request is made, the person cannot also seek review of the same determination by the VRB.
Senior Member	A member of the VRB appointed by the Governor–General who usually presides at VRB hearings, and who usually has legal qualifications.
Service chief	The Chief of the Navy, the Chief of the Army, or the Chief of the Air Force.
Services Member	A member of the VRB appointed by the Governor–General who was nominated by an organisation representing veterans throughout Australia, and who usually has broad and extensive military experience.
SoP	Statement of Principles determined by the Repatriation Medical Authority.
Special Rate	The highest rate of disability pension (also called the 'TPI' rate). It is paid if the person is blind due to accepted disabilities, or if the person meets certain tests concerning incapacity for work. One of these tests involves being unable to do more than 8 hours of remunerative work a week due to accepted disabilities.
SRCA	*Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988.*
Telephone hearing	A VRB hearing conducted by telephone between a VRB hearing room and another location.
VEA	*Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986.*
Veteran	A person who has rendered eligible war service under Part II of the VEA.
Video hearing	A VRB hearing conducted by video–link between a VRB hearing room and another location.
VRB	Veterans' Review Board.
War–caused death	A death for which liability has been accepted under Part II of the VEA as related to eligible war service.
War–caused disease	A disease for which liability has been accepted under Part II of the VEA as related to eligible war service.
War–caused injury	An injury for which liability has been accepted under Part II of the VEA as related to eligible war service.

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