

Reviews

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Policy

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this document is to provide guidance for the administration under the Veterans' Support Act 2014 (the Act) of reviews under the Act of decisions about core eligibility to Veterans' Affairs entitlements or services. Concerns that a veteran may have about Veterans' Affairs' administration of the entitlements or services he /she has been granted will be dealt with under the Complaints policy which has its own reviews process. This policy also does not cover reviews under the Code of Veterans' and Other Claimants' Rights which also has its own review process as described in the relevant separate policy.
- 1.2 This paper may be read together with the separate papers on
- *Appeals*; and
 - *Complaints*.

2. Legislative Reference

- 2.1 The relevant legislation is sections 10(b), and 204, 214 to 227, clauses 4 and 5 of Schedule 1 of the Act and regulation 53 of the Veterans' Support Regulations 2014.

3. Eligibility for Review

- 3.1 A **veteran** or **other claimant** may apply for a review of a decision by Veterans' Affairs regarding their core eligibility for a Veterans' Affairs entitlement or service. The decision reviewed can relate to one or more of the following:
- eligibility for a Veterans' Affairs **entitlement**
 - eligibility for a Veterans' Affairs service such as rehabilitation, treatment or the Veterans' Independence Programme (NB this is for general eligibility only. Where a veteran or other claimant has an issue about the nature or quantity of a particular service, e.g. number of treatment sessions, the general *Complaints* process is to be used)
 - whether there is a relationship between a veteran's injury, illness or death and the veteran's **qualifying service**
 - whether and, if so, to what extent a veteran's service is qualifying service
 - the degree of **impairment** caused by an injury or illness
 - a Veterans' Affairs decision to decline an entitlement to a Veteran's Pension on the basis that the service on which a claim for entitlement is based is not **qualifying operational service**.

- 3.2 Only a veteran or other claimant may apply for a review of a decision by Veterans' Affairs relating to a Veterans' Affairs entitlement or service. New reviews can not be lodged on behalf of a deceased veteran or other claimant. However, an estate of a veteran or other claimant can continue to progress a review, where the review was lodged by the veteran or other claimant prior to their death.

Section 215 of the Veterans' Support Act 2014 and regulation 53 of the Veterans' Support Regulations 2014.

4. Applications for Review

- 4.1 The applicant must apply for a review within six months after receiving notification of Veterans' Affairs' decision in relation to the claim.
- 4.2 However, a review application may be made later if the **Review Officer** is satisfied that the delay was caused by circumstances beyond the applicant's control.

Section 218 of the Veterans' Support Act 2014

- 4.3 The application must be made in writing on the appropriate form provided by Veteran's Affairs and must identify the decision or decisions the applicant seeks to have reviewed and state the grounds on why the review is sought.
- 4.4 The application may also provide written submissions and any information (whether prepared by the applicant or any other person) in support of the application.

Section 217 of the Veterans' Support Act 2014.

5. Status of original decision during the review process

- 5.1 The decision(s) under review continue(s) during the application and review process or during any other proceeding relating to the decision.

Section 214(1) of the Veterans' Support Act 2014

6. Reviews undertaken by the Review Officer

- 6.1 Reviews are conducted by a Review Officer where the application for review relates to matters other than service coverage. This includes:
- eligibility for a Veterans' Affairs entitlement or service
 - whether there is a relationship between a veteran's injury, illness or death and the veteran's **qualifying service**
 - the degree of **impairment** caused by an injury or illness
 - a spouse's/partner's relationship with the deceased veteran.

- 6.2 In a case where the decision in question was made by the Deputy General Manager, the review must be conducted by a Review Officer appointed by the **General Manager**. If the decision was made by the General Manager, the review must be conducted by a Review Officer appointed by the Chief of Defence Force.

Section 219 (1)&(2) of the Veterans' Support Act 2014

7. Conduct of the Review

- 7.1 The Review Officer must act independently of Veterans' Affairs when conducting the review.
- 7.2 The Review Officer must not conduct the review if they have had any previous involvement with the claim other than as a Review Officer.
- 7.3 The Review Officer must:
- decide the review on the basis of its substantive merits under the Act
 - conduct the review on the papers without a hearing
 - comply with the principles of:
 - (i) natural justice; and
 - (ii) providing veterans, their spouses and **partners**, their **children** and **dependants** with fair entitlements;
 - (iii) promoting equal treatment of equal claims;
 - (iv) determining claims in accordance with substantial justice and the merits of the claim, rather than in accordance with any technicalities, legal forms, or legal rules of evidence; and
 - (v) any other relevant provision of the Act and the Veterans' Support Regulations 2014.

Sections 10 and 220 of the Veterans' Support Act 2014

8. Powers of the Review Officer

- 8.1 The Review Officer may require the applicant or Veterans' Affairs to provide any information he/she considers is reasonably necessary to decide the review.
- 8.2 The Review Officer may seek an assessment of the person's impairment, but only if the Review Officer considers that the assessment is reasonably necessary to decide the review.

Section 221 of the Veterans' Support Act 2014

9. The Review Officer's Decision

9.1 The Review Officer must:

- confirm the decision; or
- modify the decision; or
- revoke the decision; or
- make any other decision that is appropriate to the circumstances of the case.

9.2 If the Review Officer revokes the decision he/she must:

- substitute the Review Officer's decision for that of Veterans' Affairs; or
- require Veterans' Affairs to make the decision again in accordance with his/her directions.

Section 222 of the Veterans' Support Act 2014

9.3 A review decision ceases to be of full effect if all the parties to the review agree to a variation of it for the benefit of the claimant.

Section 214(3) of the Veterans' Support Act 2014

10. Reviews Conducted by the Review Panel

10.1 A review will be conducted by the Veterans' Service Review Panel (the Review Panel) appointed by the General Manager where the review relates to a Veterans' Affairs' decision to:

- decline a Veterans' Affairs entitlement or service on the basis that the service on which the claim for the Veterans' Affairs entitlement or service is based is not qualifying service; and
- the service on which a claim for a Veteran's Pension is based is not qualifying operational service.

Section 219(3) and 223(2) of the Veterans' Support Act 2014

11. Membership of the Review Panel

11.1 The Review Panel must comprise:

- an employee or contractor of the New Zealand Defence Force; and
- a person nominated by the Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association.

- 11.2 The members of the Review Panel must have qualifications and experience which, in the General Manager's view, are relevant to the Review Panel's function.

Section 224 of the Veterans' Support Act 2014

12. The Review Panel's Conduct and Powers

- 12.1 The Review Panel is subject to the same conditions of conduct as the Review Officer, as set out in paragraphs 7.1 to 7.3 above.
- 12.2 Like the Review Officer, the Review Panel may require the applicant or Veterans' Affairs to provide any information he/she considers is reasonably necessary to decide the review.
- 12.3 The Review Panel may also seek and receive information from any other person with relevant expertise for the review (for example an historian).

Section 225 of the Veterans' Support Act 2014

13. Immunity from civil liability

- 13.1 The following persons are immune from liability in civil proceedings for good-faith actions or omissions in carrying out their functions, duties or powers:
- General Manager of Veterans' Affairs;
 - Deputy General Manager of Veterans' Affairs;
 - other members of the New Zealand Defence Force (including Veterans' Affairs);
 - the Review Officer; and
 - the RSA member of the Review Panel.

- 13.2 The Crown itself may however be found in tort liable in respect of the actions or omissions of the above persons' discharge of their responsibilities of a judicial nature or in connection with the execution of judicial process.

Section 204 of the Veterans' Support Act 2014

14. Review Panel Decisions

- 14.1 The Review Panel's decision process must be as set out for the Review Officer in section 9 above.
- 14.2 If the members of the Review Panel are unable to agree how to decide a review, the decision under review is to be treated as if it has been confirmed by the Review Panel.

Section 226 of the Veterans' Support Act 2014

15. Advising the Veteran or Other Claimant of the Review Decision

- 15.1 Veterans' Affairs will advise the veteran or other claimant in writing of the Review Officer's or Review Panel's review decision and of the veteran's or other claimant's right of appeal.

16. Living Overseas

- 16.1 The policy for Reviews applies to all New Zealand veterans equally, irrespective of their country of residence.

17. Administration of reviews after the death of the veteran

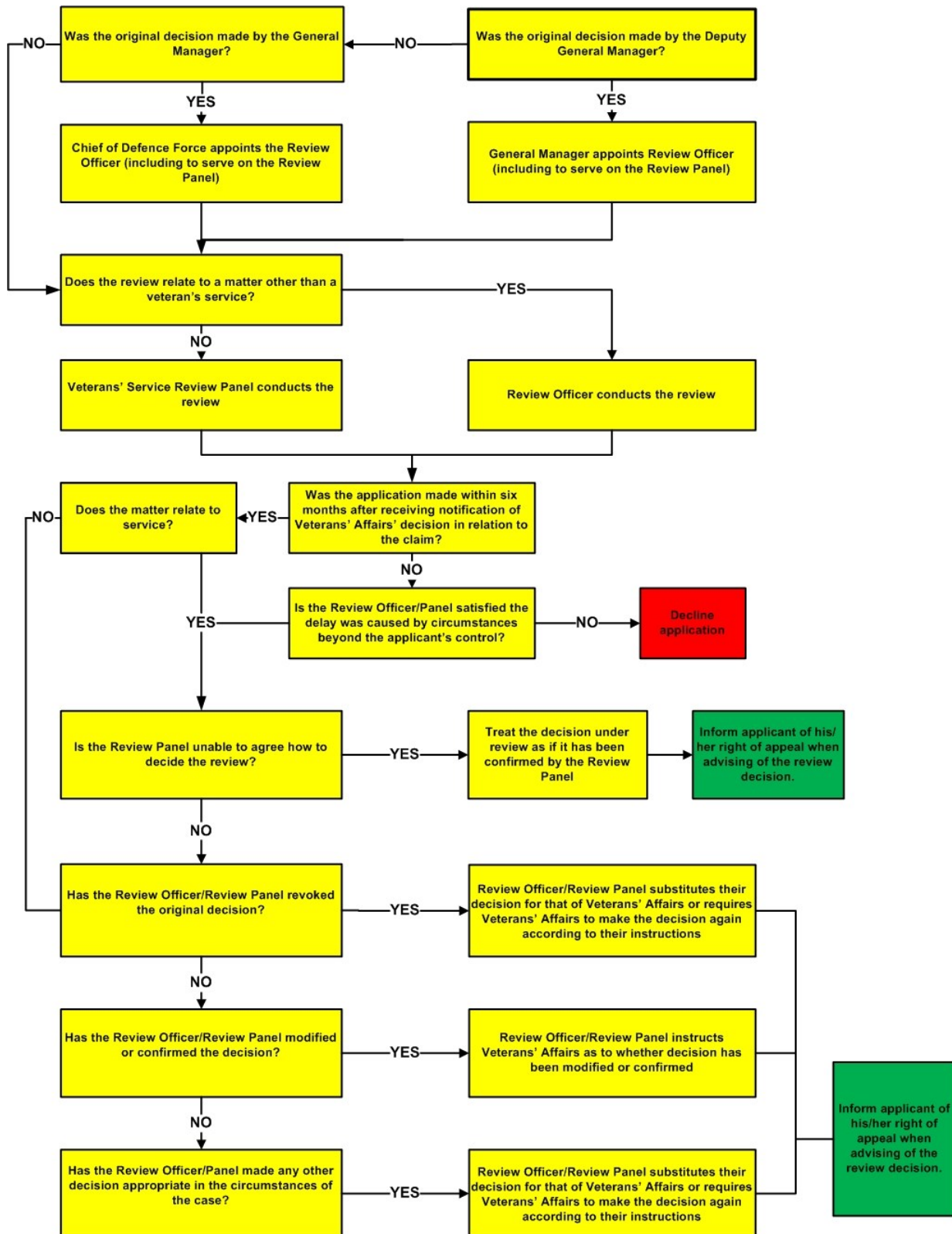
- 17.1 If a veteran or other claimant applies for a review of a Veterans' Affairs' decision about his/her eligibility for an entitlement or service, but dies before the review decision is made, the review of the decision may proceed, but there would be no right of appeal by the veteran's estate.

18. Transitional Arrangements

- 18.1 Any review under the War Pensions Act 1954 which has been instituted but not concluded by 7 December 2014 (when the Veterans' Support Act 2014 came into force) may be continued and concluded.
- 18.2 Any right of review under the War Pensions Act 1954 which had not been exercised by 7 December 2014 may be exercised and the review may be concluded.

Clauses 4 and 5 of Schedule 1 of the Veterans' Support Act 2014

Appendix: Pathway for Entitlements Review Process



Glossary

child [section 7]

In relation to a veteran:

- (a) means a natural child of the veteran; and
- (b) includes an adopted child of the veteran; and
- (c) includes any other child who would ordinarily be regarded as a child of the veteran because the veteran:
 - (i) is or was the spouse or partner of one of the child's parents; and
 - (ii) acted as a parent of the child.

child [clause 7 Schedule 2]

- (a) means a child under 14 years; and
- (b) includes any other child, if the child needs child care because of his or her physical or mental condition.

dependant [section 7]

In relation to a veteran, means any of the following persons:

- (a) a person (not being the spouse, partner, or child of the veteran) who –
 - (i) is under 18 years of age; and
 - (ii) is wholly or primarily dependent on the veteran for financial support; and
 - (iii) ordinarily resides with the veteran;
- (b) a person (not being the spouse, partner or child of the veteran) who –
 - (i) is 18 years of age or more; and
 - (ii) is under the care of the veteran; and
 - (iii) ordinarily resides with the veteran because the person is unable to live independently of the veteran due to disability, illness or advanced age;
- (c) a person who –
 - (i) is the child of the veteran; and
 - (ii) is 18 years of age or more; and
 - (iii) is under the care of the veteran; and
 - (iv) is unable to live independently of the veteran due to physical or mental infirmity.

Entitlement [policy]

A regular one-off payment made to a veteran or other claimant. Does not include the payment or reimbursement of costs or services.

includes:

- Disablement Pension
- Weekly Income Compensation
- Surviving Spouse or Partner Pension
- Children's Pension
- Children's Bursary
- Independence Allowance
- Lump Sum for Permanent Impairment
- Weekly Compensation
- Survivor's Grant
- Retirement Lump Sum
- Decorations Allowance
- Decorations Annuity

General Manager [section 7]

Means the General Manager of Veterans' Affairs appointed under section 200 of the Veterans' Support Act 2014.

impairment [section 7]

Means a loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological, or anatomical function or structure.

partner [section 7]

Means a civil union partner or a de facto partner.

other claimants [section 7]

Means:

- (a) persons who have served as members of the armed forces before 1 April 1974 and whose injury or illness was caused by, contributed to by, or aggravated by routine service in New Zealand or overseas; and
- (b) dependants of veterans; and
- (c) spouses or partners of veterans.

qualifying service [section 8]

Means:

- (a) qualifying operational service; and
- (b) qualifying routine service.

qualifying operational service [section 8]

Means:

- (a) service on any deployment treated as a war or emergency for the purposes of the War Pensions Act 1954; and
- (b) service on any deployment declared to be operational service under section 9 of the Veterans' Support Act 2014.

qualifying routine service [section 8]

Means service in the armed forces before 1 April 1974 that is not qualifying operational service.

review decision [section 7]

Means a decision made by a Review Officer, a Review Panel, or the General Manager under subpart 2 of Part 7 of the Veterans' Support Act 2014.

Review Officer [section 7]

Means a member or a contractor of the Defence Force appointed by the general manager (or by the Chief of Defence Force if section 219(2)(b) applies) to conduct reviews under subpart 2 of Part 7 of the Veterans' Support Act 2014.

Review Panel [section 7]

Means a Veterans' Service Review Panel established under section 223 of the Veterans' Support Act 2014.

veteran [section 7]

Means:

- (a) a member of the armed forces who took part in qualifying operational service at the direction of the New Zealand Government; or
- (b) a person:
 - (i) who has been:
 - (A) appointed as an employee of the Defence Force under section 61A of the Defence Act 1990; or
 - (B) seconded to the Defence Force with the permission of the Chief of Defence Force; and
 - (ii) who took part in qualifying operational service at the direction of the New Zealand Government; or
- (c) a person who, immediately before the commencement of Part 3 of this Act, is eligible for a pension under the following provisions of the War Pensions Act 1954:
 - (i) section 19 (but only if the person was a member of the forces):
 - (ii) section 55 or 56:
 - (iii) Parts 4 and 5