



## TPI FEDERATION AUSTRALIA

*“Disabled in our Service - United in our Cause”*



# Federation President's Report

August 2020

There are clear signs that with the easing of restrictions things are cautiously returning to 'normal'. This time has been very challenging for many, including those people who have lost jobs and are faced with significant financial pressures. Coupled with the economic outlook, this pressure may last for some time. Isolation has compounded the loneliness of many and has had an adverse impact on people's mental health. It is important that we continue to check on those in our neighbourhoods and networks. It is very important that we ensure that our mates are ok.

It is hoped that you will understand that the TPI Federation needs to put your current issues –

- a. fair and equitable compensation; and
- b. the need for Veterans to have hearing aids; and
- c. all the other needs of all TPIs, and your families

on hold until we see a better fiscal environment for us all. I congratulate you all as you once again defend your fellow Australians and your Country by ignoring your own needs to ensure the betterment of the younger generation. Again, thank you for your ongoing Service.

The two small stimulus payments in April and July of \$750 each, along with the lowering of the deeming rate have given you some additional income. The new deeming rate as of 1 July 2019 is

Single	Lower rate: 0.25% on the first \$51,800 of your investment assets, plus
	Upper rate: 2.25% on your investment assets over the amount of \$51,800
Couple	Lower rate: 0.25% on the first \$86,200 of your combined investment assets, plus
	Upper rate: 2.25% on your investment assets over the amount of \$86,200

You should ensure that if your spouse/partner is now unemployed because of the pandemic, that you should re-do your income and assets test with DVA to ensure you receive the maximum possible for your Service Pension or with Centrelink for your Disability Support Pension.

DVA has introduced the new Telehealth service for Veterans and you are encouraged to use this service if your Doctor or Specialist offers it to you. There is also a new Government website - <https://www.esafety.gov.au/> - where you can obtain some instructional videos to help you use a computer, the internet, how to spot a scam, help with shopping and banking online as well as how to use the Government programs such as MyGov, ATO, Medicare etc. It has an entire library of subjects. It helps all Australians to have safer, more positive experiences online. It states that it is a world leading online safety hub and it is free to sign up. There are many webinars that will help you to be safe on the internet and you can be registered at <https://beconnected.esafety.gov.au/bookings>.

On 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020 a new regulation was brought in that restricts the usage of opioid prescriptions. It should be noted that no opioid medicines have been removed from the PBS or the RPBS. The DVA Chief Medical Officer, Dr Trish Batchelor has advised –

*“in response to concerns regarding the high number of deaths and hospitalisations due to prescription opioids, the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) recommended changes to opioid listings. The Department of Health has agreed to those recommendations and made changes to the limits to the standard quantity and repeats allowed for opioids. These changes support safe and appropriate use of opioids and aim to reduce harm associated with opioid dependence and fatalities. In particular smaller packs are now available for post hospital discharge and acute care situations, in order to minimise the risk of patients developing dependence (which can happen remarkably quickly).*

*The changes to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) pain medicine restrictions are for everyone in Australia. A waiver of these restrictions for the veteran community would undermine the integrity of the requirement that all medical practitioners have an active role in the management of prescription medicine to their patients on an ongoing basis.*

*Your doctor can continue to obtain an RPBS Authority prescription for a one-month supply of opioid medicine by telephoning DVA on 1800 552 580.*

*If your doctor wishes to obtain repeats, they can continue to **post in a prescription to DVA to obtain a one month and two repeats**. This is different to when GP's prescribe for non-Veterans as Doctors can only prescribe one month at a time with no repeats – there is no option to prescribe for longer. It is good general medical practice to see a patient who requires opioids at least once every 3 months.*

*As part of these changes, pain management will need to be reviewed through consultation with another medical practitioner every 12 months. A reviewing doctor can be **any other medical practitioner** OR pain medicine specialist who will confirm the continuing need and support for your doctor's prescribed treatment. This is the main change as previously this review was only required once, after the initial 12 months of prescribing an opioid. The number of medicinal cannabis submissions which the pain specialist has identified that the Veteran has never received any pain education, and this may present an opportunity to add this, and other non-medication options into the management plan. However please note that this review does **not** need to be with a pain specialist in acknowledgement of the shortage of these specialists in Australia."*

Should you have any further issues with obtaining your medications please contact your local TPI Association or myself for assistance.

In closing, rest assured that your TPI Federation will continue to advocate to the best of our abilities, and withing the limitations placed on us by the Government, in order for your benefits and entitlements to be protected.



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