



TPI FEDERATION AUSTRALIA

“Disabled in our Service - United in our Cause”



Federation President's Report

July 2022

Election 2022

The TPI Federation of Australia welcomes the new Department of Veterans' Affairs Minister, Matt Keogh MP, DVA Assistant Minister, Matt Thistlethwaite MP, and the new DVA Opposition Minister, Barnaby Joyce MP following the completion of the 2022 Federal elections and congratulate them on their appointments. We look forward to meeting them all in the coming months. It is also hoped that they will all be able to attend the next TPI Federation Congress meeting between 14th – 16th September 2022 in Canberra.

I thank the Presidents of NSW TPI Association and the Geelong TPI Association for their kind invitations to attend their recent Xmas-in-July functions. I truly enjoy these events and it is always a pleasure to catch up with the TPI Members and their families.

The TPI Federation had a quite time, as many others did, over the COVID period and then we had the Federal Election. It is expected that we will again become very busy introducing ourselves to the new Federal Government and the many new politicians who now grace the halls of Parliament House.

Unfortunately, we lost Senators, prior to and as a result of the 2022 Election, who were great champions of the TPI community. They were Senator Kimberly Kitching who passed away in March this year and the loss of Senator Eric Abetz as a result of the Federal election. We appreciate all that they did, and tried to do, for the TPI community. We now need to canvas the position of the new Senators and Members to see if they will support the TPI community into the future. It is envisaged that we will, again, be successful in achieving this.

Prior to COVID our representations on your behalf have had many successes. Over the decades many past TPI Federation Presidents achieved a number of things for you including the 10-year campaign to correct the indexation issue on the TPI compensation payment which finally occurred in 2007. Of more recent times, and since my election to this position in 2015, there have been some successes along with some continuing campaigning that is still required.

One of the great successes for those of us in most need was the acceptance of the 15-year campaign to have the rent assistance available for TPIs. This benefit began on 1st January this year. Prior to COVID, another success was that the Department was questioned at Senate Estimates on TPI issues on a continual basis. Because of the COVID restrictions this had to be discontinued but we expect to be back into action with the commencement of the new Government restart their sitting calendar later this month. The other huge success that we have achieved is that for the past two elections we have had issues addressed within election promises. The first, in 2019, was the realisation of the Tune Review into the TPI Compensation payment along with the removal of the need for 12-session Treatment Cycle Review for Physiotherapy for all TPIs. This year, in 2022, and also as a result of the Senate Inquiry, following a 9-year campaign, we successfully saw a promise for an increase to the TPI Compensation payment. Though disappointed that the increase was a mere 10% of what is required to bring us up to the minimum wage level, but it is a start. The TPI Federation thanks the previous DVA Opposition Minister, Shayne Neumann MP, for his advocacy on this issue.

The Federal Labor Party election promise of increasing the TPI Compensation payment by \$1,000 per annum was most welcomed and it was reiterated by the Prime Minister's in his acceptance speech on the night of the election. It is hoped that inflation, and the increased cost of living, will not impact too much on the \$19.38 per week increase which was promised as at 1st January 2023! But I suspect it will. The TPI Federation will continue to advocate further with the new Government in an effort to regain some of the 7-decade decline in the TPI Compensation payment. With the increase in the minimum wage that was announced recently, we now find ourselves back to the level of only receiving ~60% of the tax-adjusted minimum wage for our economic loss compensation. Before the election it was ~62% and almost 10 years ago, when our campaign began, it was ~65%. Therefore, your continued support is just as important as it has ever been.

Royal Commission Update

The Royal Commission into Defence and Veterans Suicide is continuing, and will recommence in Hobart on 1st August 2022 and then in Darwin on 17th October 2022. There has been a change of date for the final report to be tabled from the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide. The final report is now due to be tabled on 17th June 2024.

Veterans Home Care Update

The DVA Home and Maintenance program that commenced on 1 January 2022 for VEA clients, has had some teething problems that you may be aware of. DVA has advised that providers for this service should be available by early 2023. If you have any difficulty in obtaining these services, please email or call the Association or myself.

Long Tan Bursary

The Long Tan Bursary application process will commence on 18 August 2022. The Long Tan Bursary helps eligible children and grandchildren of Vietnam veterans pay for their tertiary education. Each year 37 bursaries are awarded to successful applicants across Australia. Each bursary is worth up to \$12,000 over 3 years of continuous full-time study. Further information can be found at <https://bit.ly/3xJGPS7>

Medical Treatment Travel Allowances

Travel allowances for medical treatment will be adjusted from 1 July 2022. The new rates can be found at <https://bit.ly/3Qfgfrp>

Medical Services – Hard to Find

It is disappointing that it is becoming increasingly more difficult to find medical services who accept the DVA Health Care Card. DVA is aware of this situation. They have advised the following –

“ We encourage clients to visit their GP to arrange a referral to a suitable provider. This is because a referral to a particular healthcare provider is a clinical decision that can only be made by the referring GP.

As the role of a GP includes care coordination, it is DVA’s expectation that the referring GP will work with the client to locate a suitable provider who accepts the DVA health card.

If a GP is unable to locate a provider who accepts DVA fees, they can submit a request for assistance to the Department’s Health Approvals team at health.approval@dva.gov.au. We will then assist by providing a list of providers specialising in the required field who have billed DVA for services within the previous 12 months.

If we are unable to identify a suitable provider within a reasonable distance of the client’s residence, we can then consider a request for above-schedule fees via the prior approval process.

To request prior approval, the treating provider must submit a completed prior approval request form to health.approval@dva.gov.au.”

DVA/Centrelink Services

DVA, in conjunction with Services Australia, provides free face-to-face assistance through all their service centres and Mobile Service Centres <https://bit.ly/3tw9EPF>. The Mobile Service Centres travel around Australia to assist regional Veterans with their enquiries. In addition, there are 22 regional service centres provide extra Veterans’ Information Services (VIS). The Mobile Service Centre timetable can be found at <https://bit.ly/3MIVp0E>

Anti-Malarial Medication Support Update

DVA is working with private health insurer Bupa to deliver a national health assessment program for veterans concerned about having taken the anti-malarial medications mefloquine and tafenoquine during service in the Australian Defence Force (ADF).

The program enables veterans to receive a comprehensive health assessment free of charge from a Bupa-contracted general practitioner (GP). The GPs delivering the health assessment have been selected based on their unique experience in providing medical care to veterans.

Veterans will receive a health support recommendations report at the end of the assessment, which forms the basis for clinical and diagnostic testing and appropriate pathways for ongoing treatment by the veteran's regular GP.


Bupa has recruited 15 GPs across the country to provide free health assessments.

The first health assessments were offered in January 2021 in Brisbane. As at 21 June 2022, BUPA had recruited 14 GPs to deliver health assessments. GPs are now taking appointments in Brisbane, Adelaide, Ipswich, Townsville, Sydney, ACT, Fremantle (WA), Bendigo (VIC), Dandenong (Melbourne), Mildura (VIC) and Darwin (NT).

GPs in Mackay, Mission Beach (QLD), and Kialla (VIC) are expected to begin taking appointments in the near future. Further information can be found at <https://bit.ly/3O8u4Gt>

Conclusion

The TPI Federation will continue to assist all TPIs as best they can during the coming year and should you have any questions, please forward them to the email address below.



Ms Pat McCabe OAM

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July 2022

Important Dates

Royal Commission started –	8 July 2021
Rent Assistance Eligibility for TPIs begins –	1 January 2022
Royal Commission Hearings – Sydney –	14 February 2022
Royal Commission Interim Report –	11 August 2022
Royal Commission Submissions close –	14 October 2022
Royal Commission Final Report –	17 June 2024