

DC Forum – 5 December 2024

Claims Lodgement Support Model

General:

The Claims Lodgement Support (CLS) Model involves experienced DVA compensation staff working side-by-side with Ex Service Organisations (ESOs) and their advocates to personally assist veterans with the lodgement of compensation claims.

The initiative responds to the ageing of the ESO volunteer advocate group, attrition from the current group and difficulties in attracting new volunteer advocates. In particular it responds to submissions made to DVA by the Australian Special Air Service Association and the Vietnam Veterans' Association of Australia.

In piloting this approach, the goal has been to supplement the resources available to the existing advocacy network and allow more of their effort to be directed to welfare advocacy. At the same time, it was recognised that through their participation in the program, DVA staff would improve their knowledge of both advocacy services and Military experience.

The CLS Model was piloted in Western Australia from February to August 2024 and is now operational in a “business-as-usual” sense in WA; ready to be applied across all States and Territories, subject to support to the concept from Ex Service Organisations, and notably, ESORT.

It is important to note that the actual operation of the model can vary across ESOs. The Model is flexible and in WA has been subject to iteration or “tweaking” to meet the requirements of the ESO and / or advocacy group. At all times the core relationship with the veteran sits with the ESO, supported by the expertise provided by the CLA.

Over 400 claims have been lodged with the help of DVA Claims Lodgement Assistants in WA.

The roll-out to States and Territories, if supported, can commence in February 2025.

How the Model Operates:

The ESO arranges appointments for DVA – in doing so the ESO provides the name of the veteran requiring assistance to DVA the day prior to the meeting in order that any DVA history with the client can be captured and considered. An initial meeting takes place, usually with the advocate present, where details of the condition(s) to be claimed and information to support the claim is discussed with the veteran.

The veteran, after being informed of information requirements and what to expect during the claims process, seeks any additional information required for the claim to be lodged.

On the day after the meeting DVA provides a summary of the meeting to the ESO/Advocate.

A second meeting is usually required where the veteran is supported to load the claim into MyService. Normal DVA claims processing steps commence at the point the claim is lodged.

Phase one of the pilot has utilised in-person interviews. Phase two will commence shortly, where we will pilot an online version of the model, something that has been specifically requested by some ESOs. Noting the resource-intensive nature of the in-person model, DVA's initial assessment is that establishing an online model for use in the majority of cases will be essential to the success of the program going forward. This will ensure DVA can balance both claims lodgement advice support to ESOs and processing of claims in a timely manner, in an environment in which claim volumes continue to rise.

An in-person option will continue to be made available where it is required to support the particular needs of an ESO. One example of where DVA sees this option being essential is in provision of support to communities without ready access to ESOs, in particular indigenous veterans in remote Northern Australia, for whom the CLS Model will also require the assistance of a cultural intermediary and in many cases and interpreter.

The national roll-out may also be assisted by Veteran Support Officers (VSOs) who are located on bases across Australia. The CLS Model can easily be covered in conversations held by VSOs when they meet with serving members and appointments could potentially be made by the VSOs. These matters still require discussion with the VSO network.

National Roll-Out:

Roll-out could effectively commence in February 2025, following further piloting and tweaking of the online model. To support the national roll-out it will be important to gain ESORT endorsement and active promotion of the CLS Model by National Presidents with their State/Territory counterparts.

Deputy Commissioners will play an important part in identifying potential ESOs to approach and ideally, they will meet with the President and Advocates of the Organisation to introduce the Model and gain agreement to operate the model in partnership with the ESO. Growth of the Model via the roll-out would normally be organic, allowing ESOs to dictate the speed and extent of implementation of the Model.

A communication strategy will be prepared after ESORT has been briefed – planned for late December 2024 so that ESORT's requirements can be captured.

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