

# **Travel for Assessment, Treatment and Rehabilitation**

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# Policy

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## 1. Purpose

- 1.1 This Policy provides guidance on reimbursement of travel costs associated with a **veteran's** assessment, treatment, rehabilitation and long-term **hospital care**.
- 1.2 It does not cover travel under the **Veterans' Independence Programme**.
- 1.3 Veterans' Affairs does not reimburse travel costs associated with **counselling** for spouse or partner, child or dependant, or other support person in relation to their support to the veteran (**see separate paper on Counselling for Family Members and Support Persons**).

## 2. Legislative reference

- 2.1 The relevant legislation is:
  - sections 42–46 & 88, and Schedule 2 clause 6(1), of the Veterans' Support Act 2014
  - regulation 26B of the Veterans' Support Regulations 2014.

## 3. Eligibility

- 3.1 Under this policy, Veterans' Affairs may pay a contribution toward travel costs of:
  - a veteran travelling for an approved medical assessment, or to have treatment and rehabilitation for an **accepted injury or illness**
  - an approved travel escort assisting a veteran
  - a spouse, **partner, child, dependant** or other significant person visiting a veteran in **long-term** hospital care.

*Sections 43–45 & 88(1), and Schedule 2 clause 6(1), of the Veterans' Support Act*

## 4. Travel by veteran

- 4.1 Eligible travel by veterans (with one exception) is travel, within their country of residence only to have:
  - treatment and rehabilitation of an accepted injury or illness; or
  - medical assessments that are required for determining eligibility to an entitlement or service, or for a review/appeal against a decision relating to eligibility.

*Sections 43, 88(1), and clause 6(1) of Schedule 2, of the Veterans' Support Act*

- 4.2 In recognition of the special relationship that the New Zealand Government has with the Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau, Veterans' Affairs will pay for the above travel to/from New Zealand for veterans resident in those countries, but only when:

- the assessment, treatment or rehabilitation is not available in those countries; and
- the veteran comes under Scheme One.

*Regulation 26B(3)(b) of the Veterans' Support Regulations*

### **Travel for treatment and rehabilitation of an accepted injury or illness**

- 4.3 Veterans can claim for costs of travel to have treatment or rehabilitation, as per the **Treatment and Rehabilitation** policies, for an accepted injury or illness.

*Section 43(a) & 88(1), and Schedule 2 clause 6(1), of the Veterans' Support Act*

- 4.4 Travel should normally be to/from the nearest provider. If a veteran chooses to see a more distant one, only travel costs to/from the nearest (equivalent) provider are paid. But if the veteran needs, and has pre-approval, to see the more distant provider, the full distance is paid. For example:
- if a veteran chooses to travel 100km to a GP, when a GP 20km away could have been seen instead, only the 20km (and equivalent return trip) is paid
  - if a veteran moves house, but continues seeing current provider to finish a pre-approved course of treatment, the full journey may be paid.

- 4.5 Veterans' approved treatment and rehabilitation, and the related travel costs that may be claimed, must be set out in their Your Plans.

*Section 114 of the Veterans' Support Act*

### **Travel to medical assessment**

- 4.6 Veterans can claim for travel to medical assessments that have been approved for any of the following purposes:
- determining eligibility for an entitlement or service
  - a review process
  - an appeal process.

- 4.7 When required to have such assessments, veterans will be told in writing about their ability to claim for travel costs.

*Sections 43(b) & (c), 215 and 228 of the Veterans' Support Act*

## **5. Travel by travel escort**

- 5.1 Travel costs may be paid for a pre-approved travel escort accompanying a veteran. All the following must apply:
- veteran's own travel is covered under this policy
  - veteran has been certified in writing, by an appropriately qualified **health practitioner**, as being not fit or able to travel alone
  - escort can provide the help needed by the veteran in order to travel

- escort accompanies the veteran on the travel.

*Sections 43, 44 & 88(1), and Schedule 2 clause 6(1), of the Veterans' Support Act*

### **Medical need for escort**

- 5.2 An escort's costs are paid only when there is a medical need for the escort (not for situations such as the veteran being unqualified to drive).

*Section 44(2) of the Veterans' Support Act*

### **Reimbursement of escort's costs**

- 5.3 Eligible travel of an escort is the travel to be with the veteran, the travel with the veteran, and the travel back to the escort's own dwelling. (Any additional travel, for the escort's own purposes, is not covered).

- 5.4 The escort is eligible for the same kinds of costs as a veteran. For reimbursement purposes, the escort's costs must be:

- costs that the veteran is eligible for (even if the veteran does not actually incur or claim them); and
- actual, necessary and reasonable (for example, if the escort travels with the veteran in a private vehicle, no additional mileage costs will be paid as no additional costs have been incurred).

## **6. Travel by visitor to veteran in long-term hospital care**

- 6.1 If a veteran is in long-term hospital care for treatment of an accepted injury or illness, travel costs may be paid for the following visitors:

- spouse or partner
- children or dependants
- any other person Veterans' Affairs considers appropriate.

*Section 45 of the Veterans' Support Act*

- 6.2 Claimants who are not the veteran's spouse, partner, child or dependant are considered on a case-by-case basis, including:

- the nature of the relationship
- whether they provide emotional, social, spiritual or economic support
- other relevant circumstances of the veteran, such as not having a spouse, partner or child.

- 6.3 Examples of people that may be approved are sibling; ex-spouse or partner; parent; long-established friend (particularly if the veteran has no spouse/children).

### **Determining eligible visitors**

- 6.4 The veteran decides who, of the eligible people, can claim travel costs.

- 6.5 Where veterans are incapacitated and unable to make the decision for themselves the person with legal authority over their affairs, or the next-of-kin, may nominate eligible visitors.
- 6.6 If the veteran has not nominated anyone to those roles, claims for travel costs can be made by the spouse, partner, children, dependants or parents.

### Reimbursement of visitors' costs

- 6.7 For each eligible veteran, visitors' actual, necessary and reasonable travel costs can be paid up to a cap of \$2000 over a 12-month period. For example:
- veteran has a child living overseas — the funding may be used in (in part or whole) toward reimbursing an international airfare
  - veteran living in rural town is admitted to hospital an hour's drive away — the funding can reimburse the spouse's reasonable travel costs to visit, such as fuel, parking or toll fees.
- 6.8 While the veteran remains in long-term hospital care, the funding can be used until the allocation has been exhausted.

## 7. Reimbursement

- 7.1 Costs that may be reimbursed are actual, necessary and reasonable:

- transport costs
- meal and accommodation costs
- out-of-pocket expenses.

*Section 42 & 88(1), and Schedule 2 clause 6(1), of the Veterans' Support Act*

### Transport costs

- 7.2 Transport costs include travel by bus, train, ferry or private vehicle. Payment rates are:

|  |                                    |
|--|------------------------------------|
| <i>Commuter rail, bus, ferry services:</i> | Fare paid                          |
| <i>Private vehicle (round trip):</i>       | First 200km — \$0.62 per km        |
|  | Beyond first 200km — \$0.27 per km |
| <i>Other transport:</i>                    | Assessed case by case              |

*Section 42(a) of the Veterans' Support Act; regulation 26B of the Veterans' Support Regulations*

### Private vehicle

- 7.3 "Private vehicle" refers to a motorised road vehicle, and excludes:

- mobility devices (and other essentially non-road vehicles)
- commercial services.

- 7.4 Distance travelled is calculated on the day the claim is processed, using the shortest route between locations as given by:

- for travel within New Zealand — **maps.aa.co.nz**
- for travel within Australia — **whereis.com**
- for travel within other countries — **maps.google.com**

7.5 The veteran (or other eligible traveller) does not have to be the driver.

7.6 Where the severity of a veteran's accepted injury or illness makes travel exceptionally onerous, the Manager Veterans' Services has discretion to approve payment at the higher (\$0.62) rate, for round trip-distances over 200km.

#### *Ambulance*

7.7 Costs of emergency ambulance transport may be reimbursed, if not covered by other service providers such as ACC, a DHB or a regional free ambulance service.

7.8 Costs of non-emergency (private hire) ambulance transport may be reimbursed only if not covered by other service providers, and if no other transport could reasonably have been used.

7.9 If a veteran has been reimbursed for non-emergency ambulance services more than twice in a year, and the need is likely to continue, Case Managers should consider raising with the veteran the option of registration in the St John Supporter Scheme (to reduce ambulance charges for future trips).

#### *Only actual, necessary and reasonable costs paid*

7.10 Unnecessary or unreasonable costs are not reimbursed, for example:

- a taxi when a private motor vehicle or public transport is available and practical
- public transport that should have been free with a SuperGold Card.

#### **Accommodation costs**

7.11 Maximum payable per night for accommodation is:

- one approved traveller — \$110
- two approved travellers — \$150.

#### *Section 42(b) of the Veterans' Support Act*

7.12 Accommodation may be paid if an overnight stay is needed to fulfil the purpose of the travel. For a veteran this is the case if no appointment is available, within a reasonable time, that can be kept without staying overnight—for example, if the only available appointment is:

- so early in the day that the veteran cannot travel to it on the day; or
- so late in the day that the veteran cannot travel back that day.

7.13 In making this determination, the veteran's health and any relevant recommendations of the health practitioner should be taken into account.

7.14 Accommodation at a private residence is not reimbursed.

## Meal costs

7.15 If an overnight stay is needed to fulfil the purpose of the travel, actual, necessary and reasonable cost of meals may be reimbursed as follows.

### *Payment rates*

7.16 For periods under 24 hours (per approved traveller), we can pay up to:

- dinner — \$45
- lunch — \$25
- breakfast — \$15.

7.17 For periods greater than 24 hours, up to \$85 (per individual) can be paid for full 24 hours. For example:

- if veteran leaves home at 08:00 and returns next day at 18:00, then lunch and dinner (day 1) and breakfast and lunch (day 2) may be paid
- if veteran leaves home at 14:00, stays away next full day and returns following day at 10:00, then dinner (day 1), the 24-hour maximum (day 2), and breakfast (day 3) apply.

### *Only actual, necessary and reasonable costs paid*

7.18 The purpose of the meal allowance is to sustain eligible travellers with the main meals they need. Costs superfluous to that purpose are not covered, such as:

- alcohol
- meals of non-eligible companions.

7.19 To help ensure compliance, staff can do the following:

- make sure travellers are aware of the expectations
- advise them to request itemized receipts where practicable
- seek more information if costs claimed are significantly higher than would be expected (as rough guide, single meal at basic fast food place should not be above \$20; at mid-level place might sometimes get above \$30).

*Section 42(b) of the Veterans' Support Act*

## Out-of-pocket expenses

7.20 Out-of-pocket expenses are necessary costs directly related to the travel, such as parking and road toll fees. They must have been unavoidable, or have reduced other travel costs (for example, a toll road taken to avoid a longer route).

7.21 Costs that are not direct outgoings on travel are not covered (for example, lost employment income while being a veteran's travel escort).

7.22 Claims are assessed case-by-case. Claimants must supply evidence the costs were incurred, such as pay and display parking tickets.

*Section 42(c) of the Veterans' Support Act*

### Costs funded by other agencies

- 7.23 Costs covered by third parties such as ACC, Ministry of Social Development or District Health Boards are not paid by Veterans' Affairs.
- 7.24 If treatment for an accepted injury or illness is funded by a third party, but associated travel is not, Veterans' Affairs can pay travel costs in accordance with this policy.

*Section 43 of the Veterans' Support Act; regulation 26B(4) of the Veterans' Support Regulations*

### Costs of cancelled travel

- 7.25 Cancelled bookings / re-scheduling costs are not reimbursed unless an acceptable reason exists for being unable to travel (to be assessed case-by-case).

## 8. Pre-approval

### Need for pre-approval

- 8.1 Some types of costs need pre-approval, including:
- travel for treatment or rehabilitation (except for GP visits, and for x-rays / diagnostic scans up to \$1000)
  - travel where the veteran is not visiting the nearest provider
  - transport other than bus, train or private vehicle
  - accommodation, meal and out-of-pocket expenses
  - any costs associated with a travel escort
  - cases where, due to disability, a traveller will not be able to supply the standard evidence of costs (these cases must be escalated to Manager Veterans' Services for pre-approval).
- 8.2 Pre-approval is not needed for **emergency medical treatment**, which will be assessed when claimed.

### Expiry of pre-approval

- 8.3 Pre-approval does not continue indefinitely. If a veteran has a treatment plan with Veterans' Affairs, pre-approval for travel costs will be aligned with this and expire when it ends.

### Payment of pre-approved costs

- 8.4 Payment is made only after the costs have been incurred and the claim received.

## 9. Claims for reimbursement

### Deadline for claiming travel costs

- 9.1 Claims must be received by the last day of the calendar month that follows the month the costs were incurred. (For example, the claim for expenses incurred on 23 September 2019 needs to be received by 31 October 2019.)

### Claims for veteran's travel (including for travel escort if applicable)

9.2 Veterans' claims should be made on the **Approved Travel** form, which can be completed by the veteran or their support person. Evidence needed is:

- street addresses (of starting location and treatment/rehabilitation provider)
- evidence of medical appointment
- tickets/receipts (originals or certified copies) as applicable, for transport services
- receipts (originals or certified copies) for other travel costs.

9.3 If veterans are unable to supply the usual evidence due to disability, the Manager Veterans' Service may pre-approve them supplying other evidence.

### Claims for visitors travelling to veterans in long-term hospital care

9.4 Claims for travel by approved visitors to veterans in long-term hospital care should be made on the **Travel (Long Term Hospital Care)** form. Evidence needed is:

- verification (such as admission/discharge sheet) of the veteran's hospital stay being at least 28 consecutive days
- itemised tickets/receipts (originals or certified copies) as applicable, for transport services, showing dates of travel
- itemised receipts (originals or certified copies) for other travel costs, that correspond with dates of travel
- any other evidence deemed necessary by Veterans' Affairs.

## 10. Claimants with service in the New Zealand Police

10.1 Recipients of (War) Disablement Pensions based on service in the New Zealand Police are likewise eligible for support under this policy.

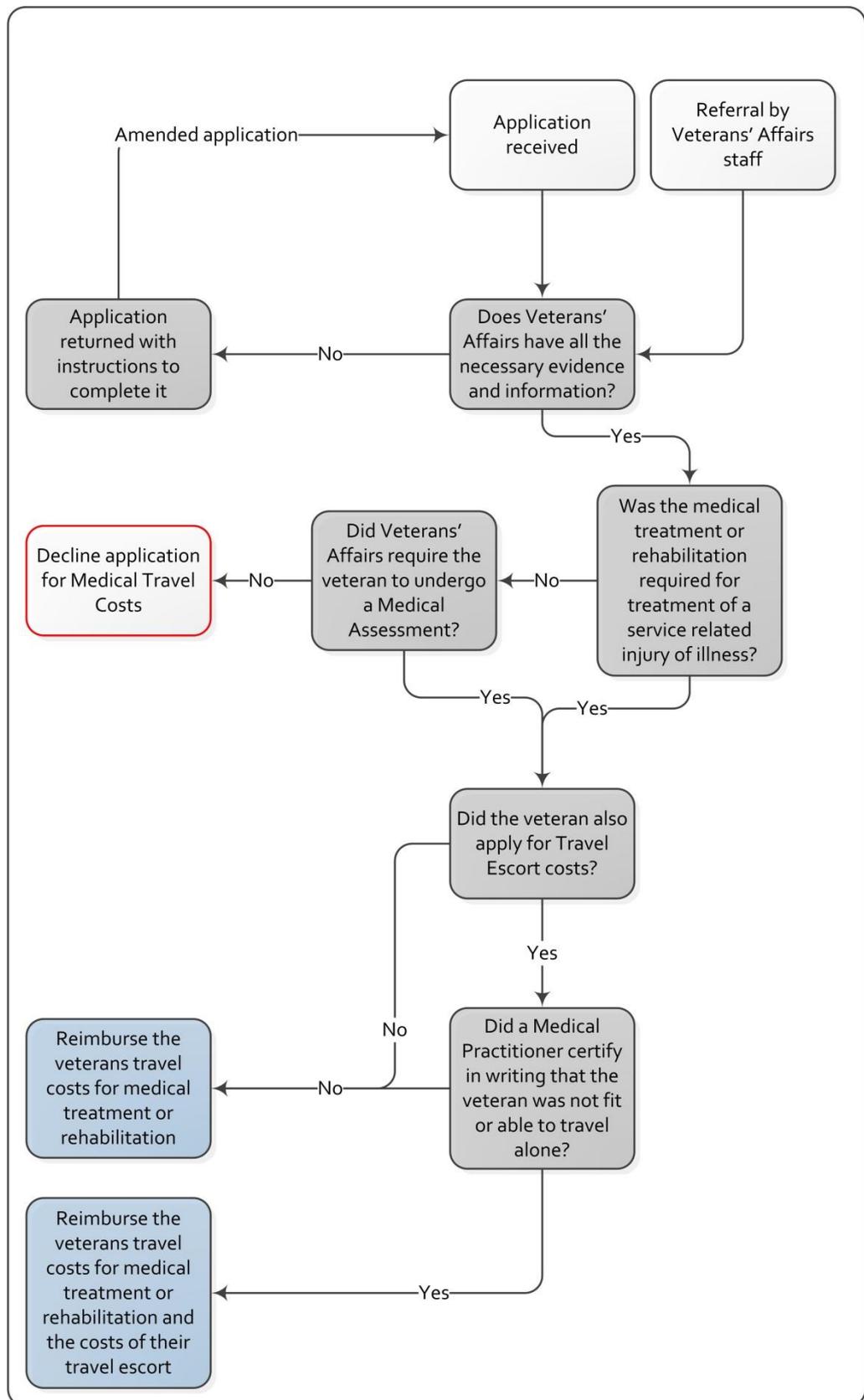
*Section 42 of the (repealed) Police Act 1958; section 110 of the Policing Act 2008; section 7 and Schedule 1 clause 6(1) of the Veterans' Support Act 2014*

## 11. Reviews, Appeals and Complaints

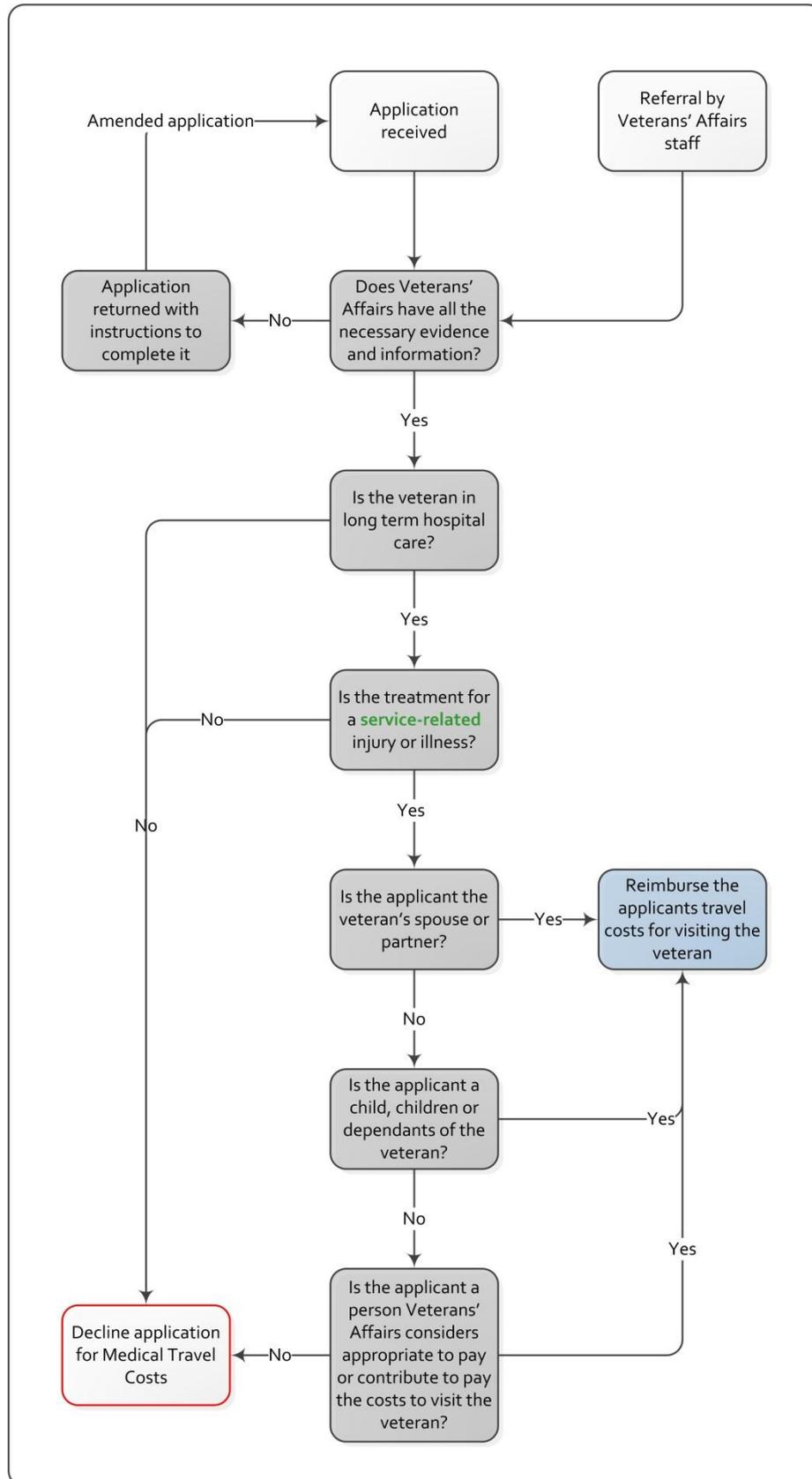
11.1 If a claimant disagrees with a decision concerning eligibility for an entitlement or service, see the **Reviews** and **Appeals** policies.

11.2 If there is a complaint about the administration, by Veterans' Affairs, of an entitlement or service, see the **Complaints** policy.

# Appendix 1: Entitlement to treatment and rehabilitation travel costs for veterans and travel escorts



## Appendix 2: Entitlement to travel costs for visitors of a veteran in long-term hospital care



## Glossary

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### accepted injury or illness

Means an injury or illness that Veterans' Affairs accepts as being service-related.

### child [section 7]

In relation to a veteran:

- (a) means a natural child of the veteran; and
- (b) includes—
  - (i) an adopted child of the veteran; and
  - (ii) a child of whom the veteran is or has been a guardian; and
  - (iii) a grandchild or a whāngai of the veteran in relation to whom the veteran acts or has acted as a parent or guardian; and
- (c) includes any other child who would ordinarily be regarded as a child of the veteran because the veteran—
  - (i) is or has been the spouse or partner of one of the child's parents; and
  - (ii) acts or has acted as a parent of the child.

### counselling [section 7]

means counselling that is provided by—

- (a) a health practitioner under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 and that is within the practitioner's scope of practice under that Act; or
- (b) a person who is recognised by the Accident Compensation Act 2001.

### Defence Force [section 7]

Defence Force has the same meaning as in **section 2(1)** of the Defence Act 1990.

### dependant [section 7]

Dependant, 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 a 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.

### emergency medical treatment

Means treatment considered by a treatment provider to be medically urgent for the prevention, diagnosis and management of acute and urgent aspects of illness and injury requiring immediate action or attention.

### guardian [section 7]

Has the same meaning as in section 15 of the Care of Children Act 2004.

**health practitioner** [section 7]

Means a person who is, or is deemed to be, registered with an authority as a practitioner of a particular [authorised or recognised] health profession.

**hospital care**

Means provision of medical, surgical or mental health services in a hospital context.

**long-term**

Means 28 consecutive days (four full calendar weeks) or more, representing a period of considerable disruption to a person's life.

**member of the armed forces** [section 7]

Means a person who is or has been a member of the New Zealand armed force raised by the Governor-General on behalf of the Sovereign,—

- (a) whether in New Zealand or elsewhere; and
- (b) whether before or after the passing of this Act.

**partner** [section 7]

Means a civil union partner or a de facto partner.

**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; or
- (b) service on any deployment declared to be operational service under section 9.

**qualifying routine service** [section 8]

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

**qualifying service** [section 8]

Means—

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

**service-related [injury or illness]** [section 7]

Means an injury or illness caused by, contributed to by, or aggravated by qualifying service.

**treatment provider** [section 7]

- (a) means a chiropractor, dentist, medical laboratory technologist, nurse, nurse practitioner, occupational therapist, optometrist, osteopath, physiotherapist, podiatrist, or medical practitioner; and
- (b) includes a member of any occupational group as added for the purposes of this definition by regulations made under section 265 and subject to any criteria specified in those regulations, including (but not limited to) whether and, if so, the extent to which members of an occupational group are recognised by the Accident Compensation Corporation as treatment providers for the purposes of the Accident Compensation Act 2001.

**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
- (aa) a member of the armed forces who took part in qualifying routine service before 1 April 1974; 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.

**whāngai** [section 7]

Means a child adopted by the veteran in accordance with Māori custom.