

VITA

VETERANS' INDEMNITY AND TRAINING ASSOCIATION

What is VITA?

The Veterans' Indemnity and Training Association (VITA) was established for the purpose of providing professional indemnity insurance for suitably qualified, trained and authorised members of ex-service organisations (ESOs) who give advice in good faith to the Ex-service Community on matters relating to Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) pension and compensation entitlements and welfare support.

VITA promotes the DVA sponsored Training & Information Program (TIP) as the training program needed for pension and welfare practitioners to be covered for professional indemnity insurance. VITA also provides an accident insurance policy to cover those people who conduct training under the auspices of TIP, providing their parent ESO is a member of VITA.

How does VITA Operate?

VITA was established by 10 ESOs and the DVA in 1995 to arrange the Insurance Contract and determine, inter alia, the protocols for member ESOs. The Association is incorporated in the Australian Capital Territory and is controlled and managed by a committee drawn from the member ESOs comprising the President, Secretary, Treasurer, two committee members and a public officer.

The Committee processes ESO membership applications/renewals and organises insurance contract renewals.

The Committee is also the first point of contact for the processing of any bona fide claims against an authorised pension/welfare practitioner of a member ESO or for an accident claim from a VITA ESO member conducting training under TIP.

DVA assists the committee with part funding of the insurance contract premiums and provides policy and operational support and advice as needed.

ESO Membership

VITA accepts applications for membership under the following guidelines:

- payment of an annual membership fee as set by the AGM of VITA;
- be a bona fide ESO providing free advice and/or advocacy service to members of its client base;
- follow the rules and guidelines of the VITA constitution, and;
- meet the accreditation requirements for their pension/welfare practitioners.

Full details of the ESO membership and operational protocols are available by contacting VITA.

Accreditation of Pension/Welfare Practitioners

Veterans or people who are trained under the TIP program are not automatically covered for insurance through VITA. People trained through the TIP program need to be authorised and accredited by their VITA member ESO to act for them in order to be covered by VITA's insurance policy. The VITA ESO members need to ensure the following criteria for authorising and accrediting practitioners to act on its behalf are followed, including:

- they are in good standing of their parent organisation and comply with the TIP *Code of Ethics*;
- they have completed TIP training, including refresher training as needed;
- authorisation in writing to act on its behalf to provide pension, compensation and or welfare services to the Ex-Service Community at a level that matches their TIP levels of competency training and currency, and
- provide their services free of charge as per the requirements of the VITA's indemnity insurance contract.

The Indemnity Insurance Cover

The Indemnity Insurance policy provided by VITA to authorised practitioners of its member organisations covers them against providing incorrect or bad advice given in the course of discussion with or acting on behalf of their clients.

The VITA insurance policy does not cover practitioners of non-VITA member organisations. Nor are individuals who are not authorised to act on behalf of a VITA member organisation – even though they may be TIP trained and a member of the organisation.

The nature of claims against a practitioner can vary greatly on the circumstances of each particular situation. Claims need to be made in writing to VITA and include factual written information from the litigant (claimant) to the practitioner or his ESO as to the matters of the incorrect or bad advice given to the litigant together with the adverse result of this advice.

The case notes the practitioner has maintained, concerning the pension/advocacy/welfare support provided to the litigant (claimant), need to be included with the claim before VITA can process the claim to its insurer. Accordingly, the client case notes of the practitioner are vital documents in the claim process.

The Paper Trail of Case Work

It is vitally important that practitioners prepare and maintain a paperwork file of their clients' advice activities to provide the insurance cover.

As each case progresses, a log of events and information needs to be maintained and added to the client file that includes any information given to the client and any notes made relating to the particular case. The case notes should also clearly state the name & address of the client, the practitioner and the name of the ESO being represented. The ESO needs to maintain a database record of client case notes. Client case notes need to be deposited with the ESO at the completion of a case, if the practitioner or client leaves the ESO to another ESO or on retirement of the practitioner as an authorised pension/welfare officer of the organisation. The records need to be kept for seven years.

How to contact VITA

Secretary

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