

Statement of Principles  
concerning

**ADJUSTMENT DISORDER**

**No. 38 of 2008**

for the purposes of the

*Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986*  
and

*Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004*

**Title**

1. This Instrument may be cited as Statement of Principles concerning adjustment disorder No. 38 of 2008.

**Determination**

2. The Repatriation Medical Authority under subsection **196B(3)** and **(8)** of the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986* (the VEA):
  - (a) revokes Instrument No. 58 of 1996 concerning adjustment disorder; and
  - (b) determines in its place this Statement of Principles.

**Kind of injury, disease or death**

3.
  - (a) This Statement of Principles is about **adjustment disorder** and **death from adjustment disorder**.
  - (b) For the purposes of this Statement of Principles, "**adjustment disorder**" means a psychiatric condition meeting the following diagnostic criteria, (derived from DSM-IV-TR):
    - A. The development of emotional or behavioural symptoms in response to an identifiable stressor(s) occurring within 3 months of the onset of the stressor(s).

- B. These symptoms or behaviours are clinically significant, as evidenced by either of the following:
  - (1) marked distress in excess of what is expected from exposure to the stressor; or
  - (2) significant impairment in social or occupational (academic) functioning.
- C. The stress-related disturbance does not meet criteria for another specific Axis I disorder and is not merely an exacerbation of a pre-existing Axis I or Axis II disorder.
- D. The symptoms do not represent bereavement.
- E. Once the stressor (or its consequences) has terminated, the symptoms do not persist for more than an additional 6 months.

#### **Basis for determining the factors**

- 4. On the sound medical-scientific evidence available, the Repatriation Medical Authority is of the view that it is more probable than not that **adjustment disorder** and **death from adjustment disorder** can be related to relevant service rendered by veterans or members of the Forces under the VEA, or members under the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004* (the MRCA).

#### **Factors that must be related to service**

- 5. Subject to clause 7, at least one of the factors set out in clause 6 must be related to the relevant service rendered by the person.

#### **Factors**

- 6. The factor that must exist before it can be said that, on the balance of probabilities, **adjustment disorder** or **death from adjustment disorder** is connected with the circumstances of a person's relevant service is:
  - (a) experiencing a category 1A stressor within the three months before the clinical onset of adjustment disorder; or
  - (b) experiencing a category 1B stressor within the three months before the clinical onset of adjustment disorder; or
  - (c) having a significant other who experiences a category 1A stressor within the three months before the clinical onset of adjustment disorder; or

- (d) experiencing a category 2 stressor within the three months before the clinical onset of adjustment disorder; or
- (e) experiencing the death of a significant other within the three months before the clinical onset of adjustment disorder; or
- (f) having a clinically significant psychiatric condition within the three months before the clinical onset of adjustment disorder; or
- (g) having a medical illness or injury which is life-threatening or which results in serious physical or cognitive disability, within the three months before the clinical onset of adjustment disorder; or
- (h) having chronic pain of at least three months duration at the time of the clinical onset of adjustment disorder; or
- (i) having a miscarriage, foetal death in-utero or stillbirth, within the three months before the clinical onset of adjustment disorder; or
- (j) inability to obtain appropriate clinical management for adjustment disorder.

**Factors that apply only to material contribution or aggravation**

- 7. Paragraph 6(j) applies only to material contribution to, or aggravation of, adjustment disorder where the person's adjustment disorder was suffered or contracted before or during (but not arising out of) the person's relevant service.

**Inclusion of Statements of Principles**

- 8. In this Statement of Principles if a relevant factor applies and that factor includes an injury or disease in respect of which there is a Statement of Principles then the factors in that last mentioned Statement of Principles apply in accordance with the terms of that Statement of Principles as in force from time to time.

**Other definitions**

- 9. For the purposes of this Statement of Principles:

**"a category 1A stressor"** means one or more of the following severe traumatic events:

- (a) experiencing a life-threatening event;
- (b) being subject to a serious physical attack or assault including rape and sexual molestation; or

- (c) being threatened with a weapon, being held captive, being kidnapped, or being tortured;

**"a category 1B stressor"** means one of the following severe traumatic events:

- (a) being an eyewitness to a person being killed or critically injured;
- (b) viewing corpses or critically injured casualties as an eyewitness;
- (c) being an eyewitness to atrocities inflicted on another person or persons;
- (d) killing or maiming a person; or
- (e) being an eyewitness to or participating in, the clearance of critically injured casualties;

**"a category 2 stressor"** means one or more of the following negative life events, the effects of which are chronic in nature and cause the person to feel on-going distress, concern or worry:

- (a) being socially isolated and unable to maintain friendships or family relationships, due to physical location, language barriers, disability, or medical or psychiatric illness;
- (b) experiencing a problem with a long-term relationship including: the break-up of a close personal relationship, the need for marital or relationship counselling, marital separation, or divorce;
- (c) having concerns in the work or school environment including: on-going disharmony with fellow work or school colleagues, perceived lack of social support within the work or school environment, perceived lack of control over tasks performed and stressful work loads, or experiencing bullying in the workplace or school environment;
- (d) experiencing serious legal issues including: being detained or held in custody, on-going involvement with the police concerning violations of the law, or court appearances associated with personal legal problems;
- (e) having severe financial hardship including: loss of employment, long periods of unemployment, foreclosure on a property, or bankruptcy;
- (f) having a family member or significant other experience a major deterioration in their health; or
- (g) being a full-time caregiver to a family member or significant other with a severe physical, mental or developmental disability;

**"a clinically significant psychiatric condition"** means any Axis I disorder of mental health that attracts a diagnosis under DSM-IV-TR which is sufficient to warrant ongoing management, which may involve regular visits (for example, at least monthly), to a psychiatrist, clinical psychologist or general practitioner;

**"a significant other"** means a person who has a close family bond or a close personal relationship and is important or influential in one's life;

**"an eyewitness"** means a person who observes an incident first hand and can give direct evidence of it. This excludes a person exposed only to media coverage of the incident;

**"chronic pain"** means continuous or almost continuous pain, which may or may not be ameliorated by analgesic medication and which is of a level to cause interference with usual work or leisure activities or activities of daily living;

**"death from adjustment disorder"** in relation to a person includes death from a terminal event or condition that was contributed to by the person's adjustment disorder;

**"DSM-IV-TR"** means the American Psychiatric Association: *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, Fourth Edition, Text Revision. Washington, DC, American Psychiatric Association, 2000;

**"miscarriage"** means the spontaneous or induced expulsion of the products of conception from the uterus before the foetus is viable;

**"relevant service"** means:

- (a) eligible war service (other than operational service) under the VEA; or
- (b) defence service (other than hazardous service) under the VEA; or
- (c) peacetime service under the MRCA;

**"terminal event"** means the proximate or ultimate cause of death and includes:

- (a) pneumonia;
- (b) respiratory failure;
- (c) cardiac arrest;
- (d) circulatory failure; or
- (e) cessation of brain function.

## **Application**

- 10.** This Instrument applies to all matters to which section 120B of the VEA or section 339 of the MRCA applies.

**Date of effect**

**11.** This Instrument takes effect from 2 July 2008.

Dated this *nineteenth* day of *June* 2008

The Common Seal of the )  
Repatriation Medical Authority )  
was affixed to this instrument )  
in the presence of: )

KEN DONALD  
CHAIRPERSON