



August 2021

## Legal assistance - Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide

As part of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide two types of legal assistance arrangements will be available - a legal financial assistance scheme and a national legal advice service.

### Legal financial assistance scheme

Legal financial assistance may be available for individuals or organisations giving evidence or formally engaging with the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide.

#### Eligibility for legal financial assistance

Legal financial assistance may be provided to an entity for their reasonable legal representation and disbursement costs where they are:

- called, or granted leave to appear, as a witness at a public or private hearing
- requested to attend a private session of the Royal Commission (if the Royal Commission authorises legal representation to be present)
- requested to attend or are attending an interview of the Royal Commission
- requested to provide a written statement that will be used as evidence of the Royal Commission
- required to comply with a notice to produce issued by the Royal Commissioner.

If your organisation has been called by the Royal Commission, the organisation will be assessed to determine whether it can meet the cost of its legal representation without incurring serious financial difficulty.

If you have been called in your personal capacity, you will be exempt from an assessment of financial circumstances.

#### Apply for assistance

To submit an application, download and complete the [Application form for legal financial assistance](#).

Scan and email your completed application with supporting documents to [finass@ag.gov.au](mailto:finass@ag.gov.au).

If you cannot send your application by email, call:

- Legal Financial Assistance Casework on 02 6141 4770 or 1800 117 995 between 8.30am – 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

If you are deaf, or have a hearing or speech impairment contact us through the National Relay Service and give 02 6141 4770 as the number you would like to call.

## Supporting information on financial circumstances

Organisations must provide full details of the applicant's financial circumstances. This includes:

- annual income from all sources
- total value of assets
- total balance of savings/shares.

Attach supporting documentation to the application, such as:

- the last 6 months of bank statements
- latest tax assessments
- annual financial statements.

We treat all information you provide to support the application in confidence.

## Costs that are covered

We will pay for reasonable legal representation and disbursement costs that you may incur if you are formally engaging with the Royal Commission, for example, costs you incur as a witness for the Royal Commission. These could include your solicitor's costs (such as attendance or preparation of documents) and disbursements (such as solicitor's travel, photocopying).

Refer to the publication [Commonwealth legal financial assistance - Assessment of costs](#) for detailed information of what is payable and at what rate.

Find out more about financial assistance in the [Commonwealth Guidelines for Legal Financial Assistance 2012: Addendum for the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide](#).

## Assessment timeframes

Completed applications will be assessed within 21 days. Incomplete applications will not be assessed. We will notify you if your application is incomplete to request missing information.

If you receive less than 21 days' notice of appearing or attending an interview of the Royal Commission, we will try to assess your application before the date of your appearance.

## Payments process

If a grant is approved, we will only pay after the work has been performed and you have lodged a claim with us. The [Commonwealth legal financial assistance - Assessment of costs](#) sets the maximum amount that we can pay under grants.

## National legal advice service

A legal advice service will be established for people who want to engage with the Royal Commission. The legal advice service will operate nationally and provide legal advice and information to assist Australian Defence Force personnel and veterans, their families, carers and supporters to access and engage with the Royal Commission. It will be an independent, trauma-informed, culturally safe and accessible service. The legal advice service will enable people to understand their legal rights and options in engaging with the Royal Commission.

The legal advice service will provide referral to counselling and other support services to ensure a holistic and cooperative approach to assisting people to engage with the Royal Commission. The legal advice service will not require the individual to be a formal witness of the Royal Commission.

The service will run for the duration of the Royal Commission. It is anticipated the service will be available in September 2021. More information about the legal advisory service will soon be available on Attorney-General's Department's website at [Commonwealth Legal Financial Assistance](#).

## Find out more

For more information including a copy of the guidelines governing the process for legal financial assistance visit the Attorney-General's Department's [website](#).

Contact the Legal Financial Assistance Casework team:

- call 02 6141 4770 or 1800 117 995 (between 8:30am and 5:00pm, Monday to Friday)
- email [finass@ag.gov.au](mailto:finass@ag.gov.au)

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