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Australian Government

Australian Government Response to the
Senate Standing Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation
Committee Inquiry Report into
Issues Relating to advocacy services for veterans accessing
compensation and income support

December 2025

Introduction

The Australian Government recognises veterans' advocacy plays a crucial role in ensuring veterans and families who require it, receive informed, accurate and timely advice in their engagement with the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

On 26 August 2025, the Senate re-referred an inquiry into advocacy services relating to veteran compensation and income support to the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee (The Committee) for inquiry and report.

The Committee tabled its final report 4 November 2025.

The Government's response to the recommendations of the Report follows below. The Government thanks the Committee for its work on the inquiry, as well as those who provided submissions and appeared at hearings.

**Australian Government response to the
Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee
Inquiry Report into
Issues relating to advocacy services for veterans accessing compensation and income support**

#	Committee Recommendations	Government response
1	<p>The committee recommends that the Department of Veterans' Affairs explore potential legislative action to curb harmful and deceptive business practices in the commercial veterans' advocacy sector, including but not limited to the imposition of fee caps.</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>The Government recognises an increasing prevalence of commercial veteran advocacy practices that seek to put profits ahead of veteran health and wellbeing.</p> <p>The Government is investigating legislative and policy responses to address exploitative fee practices of commercial advocates, including charging commission-based fees and other irregular practices, and will consult with the sector in relation to specific proposals to take forward.</p>
2	<p>The committee recommends that the Department of Veterans' Affairs and Department of Defence initiate a targeted public education and awareness campaign to better inform current and former Australian Defence Force personnel of the potential risks of engaging commercial, fee-for-service veterans' advocates.</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>The Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) is undertaking a targeted public awareness 'Making a Claim' education initiative. As part of this initiative the Department is sharing real life stories from veterans who have experienced challenges when seeking support to lodge compensation and rehabilitation claims.</p>

		<p>These deidentified stories, drawn from submissions to the recent Senate inquiry into veterans' advocacy services, highlight the risks some veterans have faced when engaging fee-for-service advocates. They serve as a powerful reminder of the importance of veterans' understanding their options, and their rights, before making a claim.</p>
3	<p>The committee recommends that the Australian Government explore measures to require transparency in advertising and service agreements from all entities offering veterans' advocacy.</p>	<p>Agreed-in-principle.</p> <p>The Government supports veterans having access to transparent, comprehensive information about commercial advocacy services including in relation to costs to assist them to make informed decisions. The Government will seek to address these issues as part of its work outlined in response to Recommendation 1.</p>
4	<p>The committee recommends that the Department of Veterans' Affairs investigate solutions to address the specific national security and personal privacy risks posed by offshore commercial advocacy providers and offshore data handling.</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>The Government acknowledges the national security and personal privacy risks posed by offshore advocacy providers and data handling and is investigating legislative and policy responses to this risk.</p>
5	<p>The committee recommends the establishment of a National Veterans' Legal Service based on the former Defence and Veterans' Legal Service and current Veterans' Advocacy Service run through Legal Aid New South Wales and funded through the National Access to Justice Partnership.</p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>The Government recognises the importance of ensuring that veterans and their families can access appropriate advice and assistance to support their engagement with compensation and income support systems. Veterans may be able to access to Australian Government-funded legal assistance through the <i>National Access to Justice Partnership 2025-2030</i> (NAJP), which commenced on 1 July 2025. Under the NAJP, matters relating to military entitlements and</p>

		<p>compensation claims are identified as a Commonwealth civil law priority, guiding legal assistance services to prioritise support in these areas.</p> <p>The Government also notes that the Veterans' Review Board review pathway allows for a more veteran-friendly merits review process that is more accessible and does not require legal representation. The Board's framework enables applicants to participate in a fair and just review process that aims to reach the correct or preferable decision, maintaining procedural fairness without formal legal advocacy.</p>
6	<p>The committee recommends the Australian Government implement Recommendation 99 of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide as a matter of urgency.</p>	<p>Agreed-in-principle.</p> <p>The Government agrees to improving compensation and wellbeing advocacy, including funding compensation advocacy services that are provided at no cost to veterans. The Government will provide an increase in funding and restructure the BEST Program which supports free-to-the-veteran advocacy.</p>
7	<p>The committee recommends that the Department of Veterans' Affairs work closely with the Institute of Veterans Advocacy (IVA) as it becomes operational to ensure that it provides effective professional oversight and regulation of the veterans' advocacy sector.</p> <p>As part of this, the Australian Government should provide sufficient funding to the IVA to ensure its financial viability and consider how elements of the Office of the Migration Agents</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>The Government supports the Institute of Veterans Advocacy as the national professional association for the veteran advocacy sector.</p> <p>The Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) will work closely with the IVA as it becomes operational, as the national professional association for veteran advocates. The Government will provide IVA with \$3.0 million in initial funding to enable the IVA to complete its establishment activities.</p>

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<p>Regulation Authority could be usefully applied to the IVA and the regulation of the veterans' advocacy sector.</p> <p>After two years of operation, the Australian Government should formally evaluate the effectiveness and financial viability of the IVA.</p>	<p>The effectiveness and financial viability of the IVA will be reviewed at an appropriate interval.</p>
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