



SALUTEFORSERVICE

08/10/2025

Committee Secretariat
Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

By email: fadt.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretariat,

**Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee (the Committee)
Inquiry into Issues relating to advocacy services for veterans accessing compensation and income support (the Inquiry)**

I refer to the above inquiry, and the public hearing that took place on 26 September 2025.

Salute For Service Australia Ltd (**Salute For Service**), was named during the public hearing by Mr John Weston as a representative of RSL Victoria. I write on behalf of Salute For Service to exercise its right of reply and provide further information and detail about the important work carried out by Salute For Service.

Salute For Service

Salute For Service is a registered Australian not-for-profit charity that was established for the sole purpose of supporting current and ex-serving members of the Australian Defence Force and their families. Salute For Service is governed by the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission, with full Deductible Gift Recipient Status and meets all compliance and reporting requirements. Salute For Service is guided by a Board that is committed to strong governance and ethical leadership, and all decisions are measured against our goal of delivering better outcomes for veterans and their families.

Salute For Service has supported an estimated 9,000 veterans in the last year, and currently supports more than 300 veterans and their families on a weekly basis. This support is provided through a holistic and veteran-centred suite of programs that are designed to meet the full spectrum of needs that they may have. These programs include:

- **Combat to Career:** this program assists veterans to transition from active service into meaningful civilian work and provides support in career planning, skill development, and job matching;
- **Support services:** Salute For Service provides direct financial aid, financial assistance and financial counselling, assistance with navigating healthcare, mental health and psychosocial support, case management, and practical assistance;
- **Social Programs:** these programs help to foster community, belonging, and peer support to reduce isolation and build resilience;
- **Toolbox:** Toolbox is the largest Australian informational repository of vital information, support services, and practical courses and skills that is provided to the Australian veteran and family community in Australia;





SALUTEFORSERVICE

- **Legacy Learning:** this program provides dedicated educational support for the children of veterans, and ensures that they have access to tutoring, mentoring, and other resources to help them thrive both academically and personally.

The programs outlined above are the foundation of the work undertaken by Salute For Service, and are provided to veterans based on each person's individual needs. The majority of veterans are connected to support services provided by independent organisations, rather than to organisations related to Salute For Service.

Salute For Service prioritises sustainability and independence. While we value and appreciate grants and philanthropic donations, the structure of Salute For Service ensures that the organisation is not reliant on external funding. We operate on a 70/30 model, which guarantees that 70% of each dollar goes directly to veteran support, whether that is healthcare, psychosocial services, educational and vocational programs, or financial relief. The remaining 30% of funding is allocated to operations to ensure that services are appropriately resourced, clinically governed, and sustainable.

One of the key operational differences between Salute For Service and other providers in this space, is that Salute For Service operates to ensure that veterans are provided with choice in the services and providers that they engage with – veterans are never pressured, incentivised, or channelled into services for the benefit of our organisation. The needs of each individual veteran drive every decision that is made.

Advocacy and Veteran Choice

Salute For Service acknowledges that the veteran advocacy space has been plagued by 'rogue operators', and have witnessed inappropriate conduct of organisations that have exploited vulnerable veterans. We condemn this behaviour in the strongest terms.

More positively, Salute For Service deeply respects the longstanding and significant work that is undertaken in Australia by free advocacy providers, such as RSL sub-branches, and other volunteer-based organisations.

We believe freedom of choice is important for veterans and note that a veteran's right to choose the advocacy and services that best meet their needs has not yet been adequately raised in this Inquiry. The same men and women who volunteered to serve our nation deserve the freedom to choose the advocacy pathway that best meets their needs. Veterans are not a homogenous group. Their needs vary widely, and a sustainable, regulated framework that guarantees both choice and protection is essential.

As set out above, this right is central to the operations of Salute For Service, with the individual needs, and choices of veterans, being at the core of all referrals and decisions that are made.





SALUTEFORSERVICE

Claims made by Mr Weston

During the Public Hearing, Mr Weston referred to recent funding that was granted to Salute For Service by the Department of Veteran Affairs for the provision of support services. Mr Weston then stated:

As I understand it, they provide you with connections to the services you need. My understanding is that all of the connections that they provide you with are owned by them. They will refer you to their advocacy company, their medical providers, their psychiatric assessment service, which is a company by the name of Medilinks.¹

I am concerned that Mr Weston has made claims that Salute For Service refers veterans to entities that are owned by the charity. This claim is simply untrue – Salute For Service does not own any other entities.

Mr Weston's inaccurate statement risks undermining the work that has been done for the benefit of veterans. Veterans are connected by Salute For Service to a wide range of service providers across Australia, including other not-for-profit organisations, community organisations, health professionals, training providers, and educational institutions, including a wide range of organisations that are wholly independent of Salute For Service, its Board, and its donors. Veterans are always advised of providers that are most appropriate to their individual needs, and connections and referrals are not made without the consent of the individual.

With respect to the recent funding granted by the Department of Veteran Affairs, I note that this was granted following a transparent and competitive process. This funding was granted specifically to deliver programs to support veterans, including:

- support for transitioning ADF members in finding employment support;
- alternate holistic programs, such as breathwork workshops, ice bath therapy, and other wellbeing programs; and
- building community connections that reduce isolation and improve wellbeing.

Mr Weston's comments were followed by claims relating to organisations that allegedly pay doctors for referrals, including significant referrals for medicinal cannabis. While Mr Weston acknowledged that these allegations were separate to the claims made about Salute For Service, the distinction did not appear to be clear to the Committee. For the avoidance of doubt, Salute For Service does not engage in referral-for-profit schemes, including those relating to medicinal cannabis.

This lack of clarity and the misleading comments are of concern. We are proud of the work that Salute For Service does for veterans in Australia, and are concerned that these misleading comments may prevent veterans from seeking much needed care and assistance. We encourage the Committee to have regard to these submissions in forming its findings and recommendations. We are separately intending to write to RSL Victoria raising our concerns with Mr Weston's comments.

¹ Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee, Inquiry into Issues relating to advocacy services for veterans accessing compensation and income support, Public Hearing transcript, 26 September 2025, page 36.





SALUTEFORSERVICE

Conclusion

Salute For Service welcomes greater scrutiny and higher standards across the sector and are of the view that veterans deserve nothing less. Salute For Service is a modern, fully transparent, and outcomes-driven charity, and we are proud to support more than 300 veterans and their families each week. It is our view that the work that we undertake has a real and measurable impact for veterans in Australia.

I respectfully request that the Committee accurately note the evidence provided in this submission. I confirm that I am available to appear before the Senate to provide further details to the matters address in this submission and answer any questions directly.

Respectfully,

Marc Diplock
Chief Executive Officer

