



Issues relating to advocacy services for veterans accessing compensation and income support

5 SEPTEMBER 2025

Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Email: fadt.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretary

Issues relating to advocacy services for veterans accessing compensation and income support

As the primary union representing employees within the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA), the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) is committed to providing a strong voice for our members in key public policy and political debates.

We welcome the opportunity to provide a submission to this inquiry into issues relating to advocacy services for veterans accessing compensation and income support. Our submission focuses on businesses brokering veterans claims applications that has the effect of exacerbating existing workload pressures on DVA staff, slowing down claims processing times, and making veterans wait longer for access to appropriate services.

While additional funding was previously provided to DVA to address processing backlogs and progress was made in reducing its reliance on external labour, the continued increasing rate of claims means there is a new backlog of unallocated claims, now over 16,000 claims and increasing. This has now resulted in unsustainable workloads not only for workers processing claims, but for workers in roles that arrange health care, education and other support services for veterans. The CPSU believes delays in processing and access to care will become worse when the VETS Act changes take effect from 1 July 2026.

Easier online claiming and promotions of available payments and services mean DVA is experiencing record volumes of applications.¹ As well as a greater volume of claims, increased complexity of claims, whereby each condition requires a separate decision by a DVA delegate, results in longer processing times.² In March 2023, the average number of conditions per claim was 2.6, however, by April 2024, it had risen to 4.3 average conditions, an increase of 65%.³ The increase in the number of conditions claimed in new applications, largely stems from for fee

¹ Australian Public Service Commission (2024), Department of Veterans' Affairs Capability Review, p.9

² Ibid, p.10

³ Ibid, p.10

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and/or commission-based businesses lodging claims on behalf of veterans. The influx of veteran advocacy businesses attempts to game the system by inflating the list of claimable items and taking advantage of vulnerable veterans. These veteran advocacy businesses often charge commissions based on a percentage of the veterans' compensation. Some are charging thousands of dollars to assist veterans to lodge claims.⁴ The more conditions that are accepted, the larger the compensation and the higher the commission.

Our members report that many of these businesses are based offshore, and on top of lodging claims on behalf of veterans for excessive numbers of conditions, they have also been known to withdraw claims following indications of a likely refusal – but only after the majority of the processing work has been undertaken through the claims process by our members. These businesses continue to prey on veterans through excessive commission-based fee structures, making the work of our members more challenging and resource-intensive, whilst also contributing to the clogging of claims processing.

To address this, the CPSU recommends that regulation and oversight of veteran advocacy businesses is introduced to eliminate the exploitation of veterans and the clogging of the DVA claims process.

The CPSU is happy to provide further information regarding any of the matters raised in this submission and supplementary information on other relevant issues.

If you require further information, please contact Osmond Chiu, Senior Policy and Research Officer,

Yours faithfully

Brooke Muscat
National President, CPSU-PSU Group

⁴ Ibid, p.36