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Broad support for the Institute of Veterans' Advocates

24 February 2025

In 2024, DVA conducted public consultation on a proposal to establish a new independent veterans' advocacy governance body - the Institute of Veterans' Advocates (the Institute).

The proposal received broad support from the veteran community; a total of 95 submissions were received during public consultation, including contributions from ex-service organisations, advocacy groups and individual veterans.

The submissions have been compiled into a final report, which is now available on the DVA website, along with individual submissions (where permission to publish was provided).

The proposal outlined what key responsibilities of the Institute might look like, including:

- Providing leadership and support to veterans' advocates
- Setting competency and training standards for the sector
- Providing access to advocacy training
- Accrediting and registering advocacy services
- Establishing a code of conduct.

Advocates can play a pivotal role in Australia's veteran support system, and having an overarching body that provides leadership and support, sets competency and training standards for the sector, and accredits and registers advocates is a good thing for the entire veteran community.

The Institute will better promote the availability of quality free advocacy services, as an alternative to services that charge a commission based on compensation payments received. The Institute will be responsible for the governance of members and will be able to take action to address poor behaviour.

Feedback from the consultation process has been vital in finalising the key responsibilities and functions of the Institute.

DVA is now working with an interim Board to establish the Institute.

The consultation report is available to download on the DVA website: [Institute of Veterans' Advocates – Consultation](#)

You can use the [Advocacy Register](#) to find an advocacy service in your area: www.advocateregister.org.au/





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Institute of Veterans' Advocacy, now accepting membership applications

23 February 2026

The independent Institute of Veterans' Advocacy (IVA) has commenced accepting applications for membership, marking a significant milestone in its establishment as Australia's professional association for veterans' advocates. Membership to the IVA is open to all veteran advocates who meet the competency, training, and professional standards.

Chair Michael von Berg, MC OAM described the milestone of accepting membership applications as an exciting time.

"The Board has been working hard to establish the foundations of the IVA, and we're now looking forward to engaging with the membership and building an organisation that supports this incredibly important sector," Mr von Berg said.

The IVA's establishment has been supported through targeted government investment and forms part of broader work to strengthen protections for veterans and improve professional oversight, ethical and professional standards in the advocacy sector.

The IVA will set competency and training standards for the veterans' advocacy sector, establish and implement a formal code of conduct, and provide supervision of advocates' work.

More information about the IVA, including membership categories and details about how to apply for an IVA membership are available at: www.iva.org.au.

DVA will continue to work with the IVA as the professional body for veterans' advocates and encourages all professional advocates to register with the IVA.

Feedback



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Institute of Veterans' Advocates – Consultation

24 February 2025



Institute of Veterans' Advocates – Consultation

Download as PDF (193.31 KB)

Overview

In 2024 the ESORT Advocacy Working Group proposed to establish an Institute of Veterans' Advocates (the Institute) as a national professional association for veterans' advocates.

Under the proposal, the Institute would provide leadership and support to veterans' advocates, set competency and training standards for the sector, and accredit and register advocates. The Institute would similarly establish a code of conduct for advocates and provide members with access to the training and tools they need to deliver high quality advocacy services.

Consultation on the proposal commenced on 23 August 2024 and closed on 4 October 2024.

95 submissions were received from a range of stakeholders including ex-service organisations, other organisations, advocates and veterans.

The Consultation Report is available for download and [submissions](#) received can be viewed online.

Feedback from the consultation process has been vital in finalising the key responsibilities and functions of the Institute.

Feedback



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- Advocacy, Training & Development Program
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Consultation Report

The Institute of Veterans' Advocates

January 2025

Scope of this report

This report provides a summary of the feedback received during consultation on the Ex-Service Organisation Round Table (ESORT) proposal to establish an independent Institute of Veterans' Advocates (the Institute), conducted between 23 August and 4 October 2024.

DVA conducted this consultation to seek the views of the broader veteran and advocacy community on ESORT's proposal.

This report is not intended to present policy recommendations or provide evidence on specific issues. This report represents the views that were expressed by organisations and individuals regarding the proposed creation of the Institute.

ESORT proposal: The Institute of Veterans' Advocates

Through a working group established in 2024 ESORT proposed the establishment of the **Institute of Veterans' Advocates** as a national professional association for veterans' advocates.

Under the proposal, the Institute would provide leadership and support to veterans' advocates, set competency and training standards for the sector, and accredit and register advocates. The Institute would similarly establish a code of conduct for advocates and provide members with access to the training and tools they need to deliver high quality advocacy services.

In fulfilling these responsibilities, the institute would:

- manage advocates' accreditation, registration and membership processes, including maintaining a publicly accessible register of approved advocates (replacing the current ATDP advocate register)
- undertake education, communication, promotion and other activities to build awareness in the veteran community of the services provided by approved veterans' advocates
- monitor members' compliance with the Institute's Code of Ethics, training and professional development requirements, competency standards and other conditions of membership, including managing complaints and discipline processes (including referring matters to other professional bodies e.g. law societies), and
- undertake quality assurance and continuous improvement activities to assist advocates to provide quality services and advice.

Consultation overview

There was significant interest in the proposal with 95 complete submissions received online and via email:

- 80 comments via the webform or email, and
- 15 document submissions.

Of the 95 submissions received - 61 of these were from individuals (advocates, veterans and interested parties) and 34 identified as an organisation (24 identified as a veteran's organisation, ten as another organisation - including, Commonwealth, State, Territory or Local Government agency and the legal sector/individual solicitors).

When making a submission, providing identifying data was optional, with many electing not to provide any further information.

Key take outs

Broad support for the Institute

Most submissions supported the concept of the Institute. Many submissions flagged more detail was needed on a variety of operational matters.

Governance

A common sentiment was that the Institute must be independent to gain trust and be successful.

Themes from submissions

Broad support for the Institute

The majority of submissions supported the concept of the Institute and the need to govern and standardise advocacy services.

Some submissions sought clarification and further detail on the elements of the proposal and put forward questions and issues which should be considered when progressing this work.

Only eight submissions outlined that they did not support the proposal, either in its current form or with amendment.

Governance

A common view was that the Institute should be independent.

Some submissions made suggestions on the composition of the governing board, including representatives who were veterans, family of a veteran or had technical expertise.

Fee-for-service providers

A number of submissions noted the importance of maintaining the volunteer advocate cohort and the expertise they bring to advocacy services.

There were mixed views regarding allowing fee for service advocates to become members of the proposed institute. These included that the commercial advocacy sector should be allowed to operate but with stronger regulation governing their practices, to views that veterans' advocates should not be allowed to charge a fee for their services.

Institute membership

There were a number of differing views on who should be eligible for membership ranging from compulsory membership for all advocates lodging claims (e.g. consistent with legal and financial sectors) to excluding fee-for-service providers.

Many submissions also sought more detail on the requirements for membership e.g. the level of training and experience needed for various membership types, and the mechanisms for accrediting advocates and ensuring their skills remained up to date.

Ethical and service and standards

There was broad support for a code of ethics and standards to be established to govern advocacy practices. A number of submissions put forward suggestions for what these codes might entail e.g. advertising standards.

Regulation

Some submissions raised the ability to uphold/enforce standards without legislative powers, and the need to more tightly regulate practices within the commercial sector.

Timing

A small number of submissions expressed views on the timing of implementation, primarily around ensuring the proposal aligned with broader reform work, including the Veterans' Entitlements, Treatment and Support (Simplification and Harmonisation) Bill 2024 (which was before the Senate at the time of consultation), and the Government's response to recommendations in the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide's Final report.

Other issues

Several submissions sought more detail relating to the Institute's funding arrangements.

Some submissions suggested further enhancing advocacy training.

Some submissions suggested that solicitors should be excluded from regime.



11 December 2025

From the Department

Alison Frame Secretary, Department of Veterans' Affairs



DVA is continuing to take meaningful steps in strengthening how we support the veteran community while responding to the recommendations from the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide.

One year on from the Government's response to the Royal Commission's Final Report, the Minister recently outlined the significant progress that has been made not only within DVA and Defence but across government in implementing the recommendations.

By the end of December, 32 recommendations will have been implemented, with a further 89 recommendations in progress or under consideration.

One exciting initiative starting on 1 July 2026 will be the new agency focused on veteran and family wellbeing. The Government is providing \$78 million over 4 years to establish the agency, which will

focus on the overall wellbeing of veterans and families, while providing wrap around support for at-risk veterans as they transition out of the ADF.

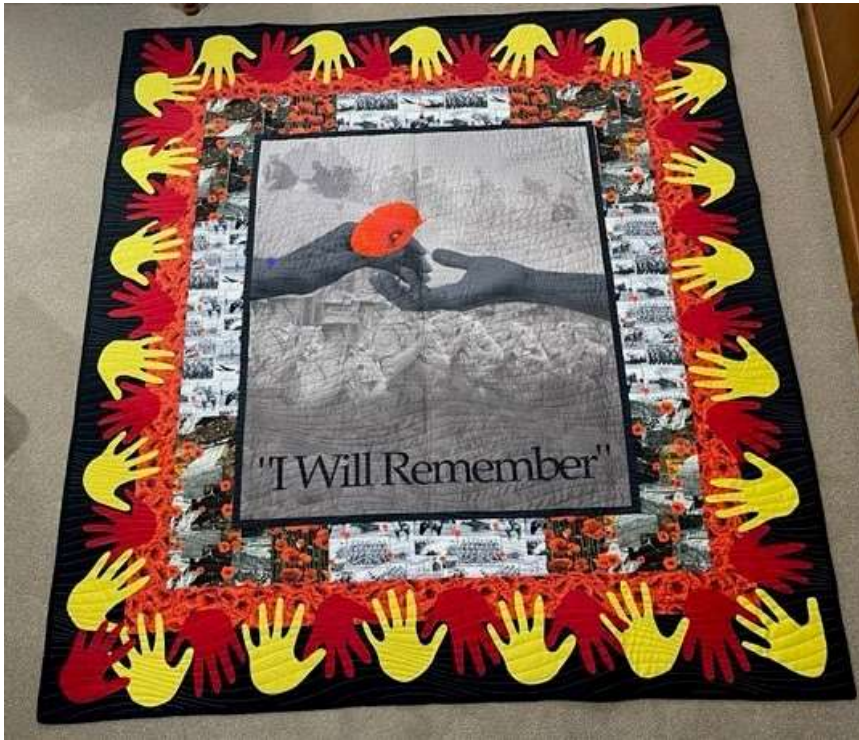
During the co-design work in which many from the veteran community participated, we heard that transition is not a single event where a person moves from military to civilian life, but an ongoing journey of change that unfolds over time. The agency will strengthen access to supports across the country – working with the Veteran Access Network, Open Arms and the Veterans' and Families' Hub network. It will also have a remit for complex case management, wellbeing service coordination, referral concierge and a hotline. (More about the new agency is on [page 5](#) of this edition of *Vetaffairs*.)

From 1 July 2026, Government funding will be available for veteran specific mental health care plans to support GPs and psychiatrists providing proactive, continuous and connected care for veterans experiencing mental health conditions.

The emphasis on wellbeing and up-front prevention and treatment means that veterans can have conditions treated before they become chronic.

Overseeing this emerging ecosystem is the new Defence and Veterans' Services Commission – an independent, statutory entity dedicated to veteran welfare. DVA is already working with the new Commission to play our part in fulfilling the role intended for it by the Royal Commission. (See [page 5](#) for more information.)

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Commemorative quilt from the Families and Friends of the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors

We recently released DVA's Suicide Prevention Framework. There is nothing more important than supporting the wellbeing of those in our community. I was powerfully reminded of this at a Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors workshop earlier this year, where DVA was presented with a quilt 'stitched with love and hope, by and for families who live with loss'.

The new Suicide Prevention Framework recognises that suicide is complex, with many contributing factors, and reflects the unique challenges faced by serving and ex-serving ADF members and those who support them. It acts as a collaborative roadmap for government, service providers, communities and individuals. (You can read more on [page 5](#).) As the Director of the National Suicide Prevention Office pointed out, DVA is the first Commonwealth Government department or agency to develop a dedicated suicide prevention plan following the

release of the National Suicide Prevention Strategy.

Our work in the advocacy space also continues at pace to ensure that veterans and their families have access to free, professional advocacy services. The integrity of the veteran support system is paramount and we are determined to eliminate exploitative and irregular business practices, especially by commissions-based advocates and their associated entities.

The Government has announced it will provide funding to the new Institute of Veterans' Advocacy to act as the professional association for veteran advocates to ensure more advocates are appropriately trained, qualified and required to comply with ethics and conduct rules. It is also more than doubling funding to the Building Excellence in Support and Training (BEST) grants program to enable more advocates to deliver services that will be free for veterans and give organisations greater funding certainty.

As you're aware, new laws that govern the veteran support system come into effect on 1 July next year. The Department has been busy preparing for the start of the *Veterans' Entitlements, Treatment and Support (Simplification and Harmonisation) Act 2025*, with a plethora of information and support being made available to all who intend to lodge a claim after this date. (You can read more on [page 7](#).)

A new Claims Lodgement Assistant (CLA) program is already connecting veterans with specially trained DVA staff who sit alongside ESO advocates to provide personalised guidance throughout the claims process. This initiative will be further expanded in 2026.

Remembrance Day commemorations this year were made more memorable by a visit of Her Royal Highness, Princess Anne. In the days prior, DVA's Office of Australian War Graves hosted a Service of Remembrance at the Sydney War Cemetery, where the Princess Royal laid a wreath and visited the graves of veterans. The Princess Royal is the Colonel-in-Chief of the Royal Australian Corps of Signals and was also in Australia to mark the Centenary of the Corps.

Earlier this year, the Princess Royal was also a guest at our Anzac Day services in Gallipoli. For the first time, veterans and family members of veterans travelled with our DVA delivery support teams in 2025 to assist with Anzac Day services in Türkiye, France, Malaysia and Papua New Guinea. This was a resounding success and we are increasing the number of volunteers participating next year, having received more than 850 applications from the veteran community expressing interest in joining our teams.

Finally, the festive season is a time of joy, but can bring mixed emotions for families, depending on your personal circumstances. Remember to reach out if you need to: The Open Arms phone line is available around the clock. There is military-aware mental health support available for veterans and their immediate families, day and night, 365 days a year, on 1800 011 046.

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I wish everyone a merry and peaceful Christmas, and I look forward to the new year, as we work together to create a stronger and healthier veteran community.



Escorting Her Royal Highness Anne, the Princess Royal, through the Sydney War Cemetery in Rookwood.



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A new Institute of Veterans' Advocates

Overview

The Australian Government is committed to ensuring high quality support is available for Australian veterans and families when they need it. Veterans' advocacy plays a critical role in ensuring veterans and families receive informed, accurate and timely advice in relation to:

- lodging claims for compensation or other assistance with the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA)
- seeking review of DVA's decisions through relevant tribunals or other processes, and
- supporting their engagement with DVA and other service providers to ensure their welfare and general wellbeing needs are met.

These claims-related and welfare advocacy services are provided by a range of individuals from ex-service organisations (ESO) and commercial providers. While DVA currently provides training programs to ESOs, veterans' advocacy services are not regulated, and professional oversight of advocates' work standards and/or conduct is limited. These factors have an impact on the quality of advocacy services provided to veterans and families and have the potential to lead to poor outcomes.

These issues have recently been considered by the Ex-Service Organisations Round Table (ESORT) Advocacy Working Group, which has proposed an ***Institute of Veterans' Advocates*** (the Institute) be established as a national professional association for veterans' advocates. This paper outlines the proposal being put forward by the ESORT Working Group for consultation, prior to further consideration by Government.

Consideration by Government on this matter will consider the views of the ESORT working group, the outcomes of this consultation, as well as any views or recommendations put forward by the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide in its final report due to be delivered to Government on 9 September.

The ESORT working group proposes the Institute would, in keeping with other similar professional organisations, provide leadership and support to veterans' advocates, set competency and training standards for the sector, and accredit and register advocates. The Institute would similarly establish a code of conduct for advocates and provide members with access to the training and tools they need to deliver high quality advocacy services.

The Institute of Veterans' Advocates

In providing its advice, the ESORT working group considers that the creation of the Institute is intended to enhance the quality of services provided by, and availability of, trained veterans' advocates around Australia, and to ensure there are proper mechanisms in place to address concerns raised by the veteran community regarding the conduct of individual advocates.

Veterans and families using services from an approved advocate who is an Institute member can be assured of the advocate's credentials and standing and therefore have confidence in the services provided. Accessing the advice and support provided by an approved advocate would, in concert with other initiatives currently being undertaken by DVA, assist in ensuring veterans and families can access the services and support in a timely fashion.

The Institute is intended to enhance the standing and impact of veterans' advocacy services by:

- lifting the overall standard and availability of advocacy services
- providing members with access to a range of benefits and tools, including improved and nationally consistent training and professional development
- establishing a nationally consistent complaints handling process (including referring complaints to other professional bodies where members are subject to another equivalent discipline process e.g. law societies)
- professionalising veteran advocacy services, and enhancing the standing and recognition of advocates and advocacy services in the community, and
- creating a centre of excellence for veterans' advocacy.

Governance

The ESORT Working Group recommends the Institute to be established as a stand-alone entity (established as a Commonwealth company limited by guarantee or similar) and governed by an independent Board of Directors.

The Institute's Board would comprise:

- the Chair
- an ESO representative
- an advocate representative
- an Australian Defence Force/serving member representative
- a families representative, and
- one DVA ex-officio member and one Department of Defence ex-officio member (to ensure ongoing connection and alignment of effort).

One of the Board members (but not an ex-officio member) would be the Deputy Chair.

Initial appointments would be for a period of 3-4 years, and subsequent board appointments would be on staggered two-year rotations. Any future ESO peak body would be a key stakeholder of the Institute, including potentially holding a nominated Board position.

Membership

The Institute would have two streams of members: claims (including appeals); and welfare.

Corporate and individual memberships would be open to organisations and advocates whose services:

- are provided to veterans and families free of charge (whether advocates themselves are paid or volunteers), and
- are provided on a fee-for-service basis.

Membership eligibility would be founded on completion of relevant Advocate Training and Development Program (ATDP) courses, or recognition by the Institute of equivalent professional qualifications for welfare advocates. Recognition of Prior Learning would be available for advocates who are currently registered with the ATDP.

Claims advocates would be expected to complete relevant ATDP courses which canvass DVA processes and systems, trauma-informed service delivery, and the unique nature of military service regardless of their professional qualifications.

Currently fee-for-service advocates are not permitted to access this training.

Welfare advocates who seek membership based on qualifications other than the relevant ATDP course would be expected to undertake ATDP modules in relation to the unique nature of military service and relevant DVA processes and service offers.

The cost of ATDP training courses would encompass membership of the Institute and access to the Institute's professional indemnity scheme. Members who are subject to insurance arrangements through their paid employment (e.g. lawyers), would have an option to access arrangements set by the Institute, but could elect not to if their professional indemnity was already sufficient.

A separate Institute membership fee would not be charged.

Four membership categories would be available:

- Associate (i.e. trainees, support officers)
- Member (i.e. ATDP level 2-3 advocates, or those with equivalent experience or professional qualification)
- Fellow (i.e. ATDP level 4 advocates, or those with equivalent experience or professional qualification), and
- Corporate.

Ethical and service and standards

The Institute would establish a Code of Ethics for Veterans' Advocates (Code of Ethics), as well as service standards, to which members would be expected to adhere. The Code and standards would define the behaviour and service delivery expectations for all members including in relation to acting with integrity and respect, and the requirement to keep appropriate records and ensure advocates are responsive and accessible.

Fee-for-service advocates may also be required to adhere to additional standards, such as ensuring their relevant fee-schedules are clear and easily accessible to veterans and families.

All members would also be required to satisfy minimum training requirements and undertake continuing professional development.

The Institute would monitor members' compliance with these standards and requirements and would also administer a complaints and feedback process for issues raised about the performance or conduct of an Institute member where they are not subject to another equivalent professional discipline process.

Membership and access to the associated benefits would be able to be revoked or suspended by the Board in instances where, after due process, it is satisfied the member has been in breach of their membership requirements.

Members who are already subject to professional oversight and ethical standards through their paid employment (e.g. lawyers) would be exempt from similar standards set by the Institute.

Member benefits

It is intended Institute members would have access to a range of tools and benefits (some of which may necessitate regulatory and/or legislative change and consideration by Government) including:

- training and professional development activities, including courses in military advocacy, the unique nature of military service, and veterans' entitlements provided by DVA
- data and feedback on the quality of claims submitted to enable members and member organisations to inform continuous improvement
- enhanced *MyService* functionality including being able to lodge claims on behalf of their clients, and access to a dashboard showing the status of claims for all their clients

- streamlined claims lodgement and processing
 - access to DVA helplines and expertise
 - authority to order medical tests paid for by DVA prior to a claim being lodged
- access to professional indemnity insurance (replacing the current Veterans Indemnity and Training Association – VITA), and
- public endorsement, promotion and referral to “DVA approved advocates”.

Functions

The Institute would be responsible for:

- establishing and administering competency standards, a Code of Ethics and minimum training requirements for veterans’ advocates
- accrediting and registering veterans’ advocacy service providers
- monitoring service delivery by approved advocates including addressing complaints about the performance or behaviour of Institute members (including referring complaints to other professional bodies e.g. law societies)
- contributing to advocate training including continuing professional development, and providing advice on the design and delivery of ATDP programs, and
- facilitating professional indemnity insurance for Institute members.

In fulfilling these responsibilities, the institute would:

- manage advocates’ accreditation, registration and membership processes, including maintaining a publicly accessible register of approved advocates (replacing the current ATDP advocate register)
- undertake education, communication, promotion and other activities to build awareness in the veteran community of the services provided by approved veterans’ advocates
- monitor members’ compliance with the Institute’s Code of Ethics, training and professional development requirements, competency standards and other conditions of membership, including managing complaints and discipline processes (including referring matters to other professional bodies e.g. law societies), and
- undertake quality assurance and continuous improvement activities to assist advocates to provide quality services and advice.

It is anticipated the staff supporting the Institute in delivering these functions would be provided by DVA under a memorandum of understanding with the Institute.

Submissions are open until **COB Friday, 4 October**. You can provide your submission at - https://dva.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bxa1Baq5G9rqMwC



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Empowering veterans with choice and support for making a claim



When it comes to lodging a claim with DVA, veterans and families have more options and support than ever before. More than half of claims are successfully lodged by veterans themselves, often using MyService, DVA's secure online portal accessed through myGov (my.gov.au).

But if you'd like more help, you're never alone. Whether you prefer to lodge your own claim or seek support, DVA is committed to empowering you with clear information and trusted assistance.

Free, professionally trained advocates are available through Ex-Service Organisations (ESOs). You can access support from ESO advocates who

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are independent from DVA, professionally trained, and covered by professional indemnity insurance.

Plus, many of these advocates are veterans themselves. They bring lived experience, compassion and a deep understanding of navigating the claims process. ESO advocates can help you prepare and lodge claims via MyService, request reviews, appeal decisions or act as a support person in hearings. They can also provide holistic support – including referrals to health, housing, employment, and family services.

You can find a qualified advocate near you via the Advocacy Register at www.advocateregister.org.au

This will shortly be replaced by the list of DVA Approved Advocates who are members in good standing of the Institute of Veterans' Advocacy.

For those seeking extra help, DVA has 2 dedicated programs offering personalised guidance every step of the way. The Claims Lodgment Assistance (CLA) and Veteran Support Office (VSO) programs connect veterans and families with specially trained DVA staff who provide one-on-one guidance throughout the claims process.

Both programs offer virtual or face-to-face consultations, help you prepare documentation, and walk you through lodging your claim online. After your appointment, you'll receive a summary of next steps and confirmation of submitted conditions.

The CLA program is designed for veterans who are no longer serving in the ADF and also supports ESO advocates with tailored training and troubleshooting, ensuring they are equipped to help veterans confidently use digital platforms like MyService. You can register your interest in meeting with a CLA by emailing CLA.WA@dva.gov.au.

DVA VSOs are located on more than 50 Defence bases across Australia, providing personalised claims and transition support to all serving ADF members, including Reservists and their families. You can book a VSO appointment, or seek their support, by emailing VSO@dva.gov.au.

Advocacy should empower, not exploit

DVA is safeguarding the integrity of the veteran support system with reforms to promote informed decision-making, ensure fair, consistent support for all, and warn veterans about misleading services.

A professional institute for advocacy is being established, independently from DVA. The Institute of Veterans' Advocacy will serve as the professional organisation to accredit professional veteran advocates. It will professionalise the sector by setting competency and training

standards, accrediting and registering veteran advocates, and enforcing a code of conduct.

While commercial (fee-for-service) advocacy is a growing business, paying for advocacy doesn't guarantee faster processing, better outcomes, or greater compensation. All claims follow the same process, regardless of who lodges them.

You do not need to pay anyone to lodge a claim or get quality advocacy – trained advocates are available through ex-service organisations who provide comprehensive, free support to veterans and families. And you can always lodge your own claim online via MyService, by visiting a DVA location in person, or calling 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372).

For more information, including what to watch out for when considering fee-for-service advocacy services, see our *Making a Claim* guide on the DVA website at www.dva.gov.au/claimguide.

Remember: It's your service, your choice. You're never alone when making a claim.

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1 August 2025

From the Minister

The Hon Matt Keogh MP Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister for Defence Personnel

It was a great privilege to be reappointed as the Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel after the re-election of the Albanese Government in May.

I will continue to give everything to ensure that Australians are attracted to serving our nation in our ADF, and be confident of them and their families being respected and well supported by their leadership, mates and the Defence organisation, as well as being safe in the knowledge that whatever may befall them in service, they will be properly looked after and their service acknowledged and commemorated by a grateful nation.

Over the last 3 years, we were able to achieve a great deal together – but there's more to do.

During the last term of government, we invested in DVA's frontline claims processing staff to eliminate the unallocated claims backlog, successfully introduced and passed the *Veterans' Entitlements, Treatment and Support (Simplification and Harmonisation) Act 2025*, and responded to the [Final Report of the Royal Commission into](#)

Ask a question or search for something specific

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Feedback



Minister for Veterans' Affairs, I am determined to build on the successes of our last term in office to ensure that we continue to improve the services and support provided to the veteran community.

My key focus is the implementation of the Government's response to the Royal Commission. This will result in significant reform impacting the entire Defence and veteran community.

Consistent with the capstone recommendation (Recommendation 122), the Government has already legislated to establish the Defence and Veterans' Services Commission by the end of September 2025. Former Commonwealth Ombudsman, Mr Michael Manthorpe PSM, was appointed as interim head of the Commission to lead that work as part of the Government's response. The Commission will provide independent oversight and evidence-based advice to improve suicide prevention and wellbeing outcomes for serving and ex-serving ADF

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established in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. The

Taskforce is advising the Government on the sequencing and implementation of the response to the Royal Commission, including agreed recommendations and how best to progress recommendations that required further consideration.

In December last year when we released our response, we funded DVA to undertake consultation with the veteran community on the co-design of a new agency focused on veteran and family wellbeing (Recommendation 87); and to co-design the establishment of a peak body for ex-service organisations (ESOs) (Recommendation 89).

In recent months, DVA has conducted extensive consultation and co-design activities with the veteran and family community to progress this work.

Nobody understands better how a wellbeing agency could support veterans and their loved ones more than you, the veteran community. I thank all of you who have generously provided your time and input. It is important that these new entities are designed by veterans and families, for veterans and families.

The Royal Commission also told us the veteran community needs a national peak body that advocates with one voice for your needs. In 2024, prior to the handing down of the Royal Commission's recommendations, DVA commissioned some early work on this initiative, publishing a report on its findings – this has been used as the baseline for the co-design of the peak body.

The establishment of these entities is for veterans and families and therefore in order to be successful, they need to be co-designed by veterans and families. We have been gathering views on what you want from these new entities and that co-design process is underway. We want to ensure these entities not only meet your needs but ensure you feel confident reaching out and using their services. This is an important step in rebuilding the trust between you and DVA and Defence.

Ultimately, how these entities look belongs to you. They will be built by you, to serve you. Your input and lived experience is critical to ensuring we create bodies that are owned by you and tailored to meet your needs. We are determined to get this right so, as the Royal Commission intended, these new supports empower veterans and families to thrive.

I also want to take this opportunity to provide an update on some important work to ensure veterans receive the best possible

DVA is supporting the ex-service community to establish an independent Institute of Veterans' Advocacy. Following public

consultation in 2024, this sector-led Institute will be responsible for training, registration and accreditation of compensation and wellbeing advocates working with veterans and families as they engage with DVA. The Institute will enhance governance and standards in the advocacy sector, and ensure the focus of approved advocates is on veteran wellbeing.

The functions of the Institute include establishing a code of ethics and minimum training requirements for veteran advocates. It will accredit veteran advocacy service providers, including continuing professional development and training for advocates. Members will be provided with access to a range of benefits and tools, including improved and nationally consistent training, and establishing and administering a nationally consistent complaints handling process.

Veterans and families do not need to pay for advocacy support or hand over a share of their statutory entitlements in commission-based fees. The Institute will accept fee-for-service advocates provided they are willing to comply with the code of conduct.

There is no difference in processing timelines, outcomes, or decision making by DVA if an advocate is used. If you do use an advocate, there is no difference in the outcome for you when using a free ESO advocate, or a fee-for-service one. The same laws, processes and workflows are followed by DVA delegates in reaching their decisions.

While veterans are of course able to engage an advocate, the Government is keen to ensure they are provided with informed advice and not left financially disadvantaged in accessing their statutory entitlements. As always, if you need an advocate, please make sure to choose one that is on the Accredited Advocate Register (www.advocateregister.org.au).

These are all meaningful reforms to improve how veterans and their families are supported across the country. As your Minister, I will be working to continue the momentum on what we've already achieved. We campaigned for the Royal Commission and I will work tirelessly to ensure the Government's response to its recommendations is implemented so all those who have selflessly served our nation receive the services and supports they need.



Australian Government
Department of Veterans' Affairs



The Department of Veterans' Affairs acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia.

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