

NATION

Veterans' compo fuelled parasitic 'cowboys' and Labor will bring in accreditation

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Labor will admit that its injection of almost \$500m to speed-up veterans' compensation claims processing has unintentionally fuelled a parasitic industry of advocates ripping off former Diggers.

The Albanese government will fund an industry body that veterans advocates must be accredited with in order to charge fees, in a move Veterans' Affairs Minister Matt Keogh will say will "eradicate egregious charging behaviours" and make sure advocates are "appropriately trained, qualified and required to comply with ethics and conduct rules".

The industry shake-up comes after the Department of Veterans' Affairs in June warned the government its funding had unintentionally fuelled the parasitic industry, [as revealed by The Australian at the time](#).

According to an excerpt of his speech shared in advance with The Australian, Mr Keogh on Tuesday will tell the National Press Club that he was "enraged to hear evidence that veterans are being charged staggering fees – things like \$20,000 for a single day's work by an advocate and charging commissions as high as 29 per cent of a veteran's DVA compensation payment".

"We've even heard of \$20,000 contract break fees and a charge of more than \$30,000 for a single report," he will say.

"The commercialisation of this system began when the backlog of claims blew out under the former government, with commercial advocates making false promises that they can get a veteran's claim processed faster."

He will admit an "unintended consequence of speeding up claims processing" was a "rise in concerning behaviour from paid and commission-based advocates, as well as a concerning rise in inappropriate and sometimes illegal profiteering by providers, to the detriment of veterans".

As such, the government "will provide funding to the new 'institute of veterans' advocacy' to act as the professional association for veteran advocates", he will say.

"That will ensure more advocates are appropriately trained, qualified and required to comply with ethics and conduct rules.

"Entities applying for government Building Excellence in Support and Training – BEST – grant funding will be required to utilise advocates registered with the institute.

“Advocates that charge fees will also be required to be members of the institute and comply with its rules regarding fee structures in order to eradicate egregious charging behaviours.

“We will work closely with the sector in developing a fit-for-purpose model to ensure good access to advocates while protecting veterans.”

The government in early 2024 announced \$477m for the department to hire 600 more DVA staff to speed up claims processing. But by June, the DVA admitted this funding had encouraged the growth of a parasitic industry that skimmed money off veterans' compensation through the “charging of very significant commission-based fees”.

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The government will accept the recommendations of a recent Senate inquiry into the sector in relation to advocacy regulation and the government will seek to “better protect our veterans from unscrupulous advocates, while not over-regulating a largely volunteer service”, Mr Keogh will say.

“I want to be really clear with veterans and veteran families on this one – when choosing to use or recommend an advocate, you do not need to pay for something you can and will get for free,” he will say.

“I encourage all veterans and veteran families to find a qualified, free-to-use advocate to support you on DVA's advocacy register.”

[Opposition veterans' affairs spokesman Darren Chester](#) pledged the opposition would inquire more into the “scale of criminal activity” in relation to the veterans' compensation system in Senate estimates this week.

“The Coalition is calling on the Albanese government to develop new laws to regulate the veterans' advocacy sector,” he told The Australian.

“The (Senate) report found widespread evidence of unethical and exploitative behaviour within the commercial, fee-for-service advocacy industry and warned that the current lack of regulation is leaving vulnerable veterans open to serious financial and personal harm.

“Veterans should never be forced to pay a commission on their compensation or see their private medical data handled offshore.

“There is no reason the Albanese government couldn't introduce legislation in the first sitting week of 2026 to destroy the business model of these cowboy operators.”

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