

MINISTER KEOGH - MEDIA RELEASE - CONSULTATION NOW OPEN ON VETERANS' LEGISLATION REFORM

Department of Veterans' Affairs

OFFICIAL



**THE HON MATT KEOGH MP
MINISTER FOR VETERANS' AFFAIRS
MINISTER FOR DEFENCE PERSONNEL**

MEDIA RELEASE

28 FEBRUARY 2024

CONSULTATION NOW OPEN ON VETERANS' LEGISLATION REFORM

The Albanese Government has today released exposure draft legislation which will simplify and harmonise the century old veterans' entitlements, compensation and rehabilitation system.

The current system is difficult to understand and complex to administer. The Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide found the system was "so complicated that it adversely affects the mental health of some veterans and can be a contributing factor to suicidality."

Following consultation, the draft legislation will simplify the veteran compensation system, with all claims to be considered under a single Act. Under the new system:

- All new claims for compensation and rehabilitation from the date of commencement would be assessed under a single Act, an improved *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act (MRCA)*;
- The *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986* and the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-related Claims) Act 1988* would be closed to new claims following commencement of the new arrangements;

- All benefits being received under existing schemes will continue unaffected under grand-parenting arrangements. Any new claims after the commencement date (including claims for worsening of pre-existing conditions) will be assessed under the improved MRCA.

There will also be a number of improvements including:

- introduction of a new Additional Disablement Amount to provide similar benefits as the Extreme Disablement Adjustment for those post retirement age;
- making the higher travel allowance under MRCA available to all veterans and for all kilometres travelled;
- providing a pathway for veterans currently only covered by DRCA to qualify for the Specialist Medical Review Council and a Gold Card if they have a new claim accepted and
- increasing the general funeral allowance to \$3,000 with the amount previously set at \$2,000.

Today's release of draft legislation follows the Government's earlier consultation on a pathway to simplify the veterans' legislative framework, and provide better support to veterans and their families. Feedback from that consultation has guided the proposed changes announced today.

I welcome feedback and submissions from the veteran community and general public on the draft Veterans' Entitlements, Treatment and Support (Simplification and Harmonisation) Bill 2024, submissions close on 28 April 2024.

More information on the proposed legislation changes, and opportunities to provide feedback can be found here – www.dva.gov.au/legislationreform.

MEDIA CONTACT: media.team@dva.gov.au

Editor's note: The Government understands that the changes underway are significant and may lead to feelings of anxiety or distress for veterans and families. If this is the case, you are encouraged to contact the Open Arms Veterans and Families Counselling service. Open Arms is available 24/7 on 1800 011 046 or visit OpenArms.gov.au.

IMPORTANT: This email remains the property of the Department of Defence. Unauthorised communication and dealing with the information in the email may be a serious criminal offence. If you have received this email in error, you are requested to contact the sender and delete the email immediately.