



17 July 2026

Open Letter to the Veterans, Families and Residents of Hughes

Over recent months I have written to our local Federal Member regarding the 2026 Federal Budget and its impact on veterans and their families.

My correspondence acknowledged the Government's decision to restore funding for Invictus Australia. I welcomed that decision because veteran sport has been repeatedly shown to improve health, wellbeing, social connection and rehabilitation. Quite simply, veteran sport saves lives.

Unfortunately, that positive decision addresses only one part of a much broader issue.

My principal concern remains the proposed \$5,000 annual cap on allied health services available to veterans through the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

Despite writing to our local Member and allowing ample time for a response, I have not received one. Given the significance of this issue to the veteran community, I believe it is now appropriate to place my concerns in the public domain.

I write from a position of experience, having worked alongside veterans and their families, contributed to national inquiries, and advocated for improved veteran health and wellbeing over many years.

The Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide heard extensive evidence that veterans benefit from timely access to healthcare, multidisciplinary rehabilitation and coordinated support throughout their lives. The Senate Inquiry into Adaptive Sport Programs for Australian Defence Force Veterans similarly recognised that rehabilitation, exercise, social connection and community participation are protective factors that improve health outcomes and reduce the risk of suicide. It is therefore difficult to understand how restricting access to allied health services aligns with the evidence presented to either inquiry.

While restoring funding for Invictus Australia benefits an important program that supports a relatively small number of veterans and their families, restricting access to allied health services has the potential to affect veterans across the entire ex-service community.

Physiotherapy, psychology, exercise physiology, occupational therapy, pain management and other allied health services are not optional extras. For many veterans, they are essential to managing service-related injuries, maintaining independence, remaining in employment, participating in family life and preserving their mental health.

Veterans deserve certainty.

To date, there has been little public explanation of how the proposed cap will operate, which veterans will be affected, whether exemptions will apply, or what evidence supports limiting access to treatment. These are reasonable questions that deserve clear answers.

The Royal Commission called for improved access to care and a stronger, more coordinated system of support. The Senate Inquiry highlighted the importance of rehabilitation and community-based wellbeing initiatives. Both pointed towards strengthening support for veterans. Many veterans now question whether the proposed allied health cap is consistent with those recommendations.

This is not a political issue. Veterans come from every background and every political persuasion. Regardless of who forms government, they deserve policies that reflect the evidence gathered through national inquiries and the commitment Australia has made to those who have served.

I therefore again invite our local Federal Member to publicly outline his position on the proposed allied health cap, explain how he believes it aligns with the findings of the Royal Commission and the Senate Inquiry, and advocate for policies that place the long-term health and wellbeing of veterans and their families first.

The men and women who served this nation should never have to question whether they will be able to access the treatment they need because of an arbitrary financial limit.

Supporting veterans is not measured by words alone. It is measured by the decisions we make, the policies we implement and the care we provide long after the uniform has been hung up.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'BRU' followed by a stylized flourish.

Brad Copelin
President