

LANDMARK CLASS ACTION LAUNCHED OVER BREACH OF VETERAN DATA

Gordon Legal launches class action against the Department of Veterans Affairs.

9th October 2026

Gordon Legal has today launched a landmark privacy class action on behalf of Australian veterans and their families, following revelations that the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) routinely disclosed highly sensitive personal and medical information to the University of South Australia (UniSA).

The disclosures occurred as part of the Medicines Advice and Therapeutics Education Services Program (MATES Program), which UniSA operated on behalf of DVA from 2004.

The program was shut down in February 2024 after the Defence and Department of Veterans' Affairs Human Research Ethics Committee withdrew its ethics approval on 5 February 2024, triggering widespread concern across the veteran community.

The class action alleges that DVA unlawfully shared the sensitive personal information of approximately 300,000 veterans and their family members who held a DVA-issued health card, known as "White" or "Gold" Cards.

The information disclosed is understood to include detailed medical information, such as mental health diagnoses, sexual health information, surgical histories, and alcohol and drug dependency issues, as well as personally identifiable information, including names, residential addresses, and dates of birth.

The unauthorised disclosure of personal and sensitive information can cause significant and lasting harm, including distress, psychological injury, and a loss of trust in DVA related services.

The impact is particularly severe for many veterans who are already managing permanent physical or psychological conditions resulting from their military service.

Gordon Legal partner, Seb O'Meara, said:

"Veterans and their families entrusted the Department with intimate details of their lives, including details about their health. Many carry the psychological and physical scars of military service for our country. There is a strong sense of betrayal amongst the Veteran who are rightly concerned that their personal information was disclosed and used in the MATES Program without their knowledge or consent. Data privacy is an increasingly important issue. We can and should expect more from our government when it comes to the handling of our personal information, especially information regarding our health."

Vietnam Veteran, Alan Ashmore, said:

"I trusted that my government would honour my service with respect and dignity. What the DVA has done is a complete betrayal of that trust. For years, my medical history was being shared without my knowledge and without my consent. I still don't know what happened to my information and how many entities it has been shared with. This continues to cause me significant distress. The Veteran Covenant is a promise that the nation will do right by those who served. DVA has broken that promise and has never apologised. Veterans want accountability. Veterans deserve better."

Gordon Legal is encouraging anyone who believes they may have been affected by this unauthorised disclosure to visit www.gordonlegal.com.au/dva for further information and to register their interest in the class action. Registrations are confidential and ensure participants receive updates as the matter progresses.

- Ends -

For more information please visit: www.gordonlegal.com.au

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Gordon Legal Background

Founded in Melbourne in 2009, the Gordon Legal team has an unrivalled record of fighting for justice for working people.

Led by Peter Gordon and Andrew Grech, the firm has achieved significant legal outcomes, including the landmark Robodebt class action settlement, the Box Hill Institute student-pilot class action, ACT and Victorian Junior Doctor Wage Underpayment Class Actions, the White Island negligence case, asbestos-related claims and the Thalidomide Class Action.

Chronology of DVA Class Action Investigation

January 2004 - The Veteran MATES program was launched.

26 April 2023 - The Privacy Commissioner found, in response to a complaint made by a veteran, that DVA had interfered with their privacy and awarded them \$5,000 in compensation

29 July 2023 - An article published in the Saturday Paper revealed that the Department of Veterans' Affairs had been providing identified, complete, medical records of approximately 300,000 individuals to the University of South Australia.

10 August 2023 - In a letter to Senator Jacqui Lambie, the Minister for Veterans' Affairs Matt Keogh stated that personal information had been provided by the DVA to the University of South Australia since 2004.

18 December 2023 - Gordon Legal lodged a representative complaint with the Privacy Commissioner on behalf of all affected individuals.

5 February 2024 - The Department of Veterans' Affairs Human Research Ethics Committee withdrew its ethics approval of the MATES Program.

12 February 2024 - DVA publicly announced that it has decided to close down the MATES Program.

October 2026 - Gordon Legal issued Proceedings in the Supreme Court of Australia against the Department of Veterans' Affairs, through the Commonwealth.