



Headquarters
New Zealand Defence Force
Defence House
Private Bag 39997
Wellington Mail Centre
Lower Hutt 5045
New Zealand

OIA-2025-5573

3/5

October 2025

Spencer Jones

fyi-request-32576-9876aa61@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Spencer Jones

I refer to your request of 15 October 2025, under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA), for *veteran eligibility and support under the Veterans' Support Act 2014, with a focus on issues raised in the Paterson Report (2018) and ongoing systemic challenges*:

1. *Eligibility Statistics (2020–2025).*

- *Annual number of veterans assessed for eligibility under the Act, broken down by Scheme One (pre-7 December 1974) and Scheme Two (post-1974).*
- *Approval and denial rates for each scheme, including the most common reasons for denials (e.g., non-qualifying operational service, insufficient evidence).*

It is not possible to report and break down the data you have requested without manual analysis across a significant amount of information. This would require staff being taken away from their usual work for longer than would be reasonable to generate the requested information as veterans do not necessarily fit into either Scheme One or Scheme Two alone, some may have entitlements under both schemes. Also, the decision process is complex and the reasons why claims may be declined are not simple. They are not recorded in a readily retrievable or reportable form. This part of your request is declined in accordance with section 18(f) of the OIA, as the information requested cannot be made available without substantial collation or research.

However, a considerable amount of information is already publicly available each year in the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) Annual Report. This includes: the total number of clients (veterans and their whānau); the number of clients who receive payments and the amount paid; and, the number of new claims received and number of decisions made. NZDF Annual Reports can be found online¹.

2. *Progress on Paterson Report Recommendation 63:*

- *Any internal reviews, policy papers, or cost-benefit analyses (2023–2025) related to broadening the definition of “veteran” to include all NZDF service members, as proposed in Recommendation 63.*

¹ <https://www.nzdf.mil.nz/media-centre/search-our-libraries/documents/?search=annual+report&sort=date>

Information on the status of the Paterson Report recommendations is publicly available on the Veterans' Affairs (VA) website². Recommendation 63 currently remains open, as the Minister for Veterans indicated in 2024 that the issue should be looked at further. Subsequently, the Government introduced the Veterans' Recognition Bill, which would offer symbolic recognition of service members of the NZDF who had left the Defence Force and whose service qualified them for medallic recognition, by officially recognising them as veterans.

This would be separate to the existing definition under the Veterans' Support Act 2014, and would not propose any change to eligibility for support entitlements, as it was determined that definition remained appropriate for the purposes of the Act. The Minister's announcement is available online³. A short covering explanation is provided on the VA website⁴ and a copy of the relevant Cabinet material is available from the NZDF website⁵. Information about the progress of the Bill is available on the New Zealand Parliament website⁶.

The definition of *veteran* was also referred to on page 19 of the Briefing to the Incoming Minister for Veterans, presented on 24 November 2023, which is also available on the VA website⁷. As this matter is under active consideration, further advice and information supporting the Bill is withheld in accordance with section 9(2)(f)(iv) of the OIA, to maintain the constitutional conventions for the time being which protect the confidentiality of advice tendered by Ministers of the Crown and officials.

No other work has been undertaken within VA or the wider NZDF with regard to broadening the definition of *veteran* to include all NZDF service members.

- *Estimated number of veterans currently excluded due to non-operational service and any pilot programs addressing this.*

The definition of *veteran* under the Veterans' Support Act is explicitly determined by qualifying service. However, *Te Arataki* (the Veteran, Family and Whānau Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy Framework⁸) uses the term *veteran* as it is perhaps more widely understood and applied, and includes the following on page 20:

It is estimated that there are over 140,000 veterans in Aotearoa New Zealand – people who have completed a period of military service, but who no longer serve.

These veterans, alongside their families and whānau, are members of and participants in their local communities. This includes accessing health information, services and support as necessary.

² <https://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/about-veterans-affairs/our-programmes/the-paterson-report/recommendations/>

³ <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/more-former-defence-personnel-be-recognised-veterans>

⁴ <https://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/news-events-articles/the-veterans-recognition-bill>

⁵ https://www.nzdf.mil.nz/assets/Uploads/DocumentLibrary/SOU-25-MIN-0016_Proposed-Legislation-to-Recognise-Veterans-in-NZ.pdf

⁶ <https://bills.parliament.nz/v/6/8125ed0a-b7f4-4372-0126-08dddac05555?Tab=history&lang=en>

⁷ www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/assets/Documents/Briefing-to-the-Incoming-Minister-for-Veterans-November-2023.pdf

⁸ www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/about-veterans-affairs/our-programmes/mental-health-framework/

Of these 140,000 veterans, around 40-50,000 individuals are likely to be eligible for additional support and services from Veterans' Affairs under the Veterans' Support Act 2014. Approximately 10,000 people are currently receiving that support.

The broad definition used in Te Arataki includes everyone who has attested, covering all lengths and nature of service, even if, for example, they did not complete Basic Training.

VA does not have the authority or ability to operate programmes for anyone who is not covered by the Veterans' Support Act.

3. VANZ-ACC Coordination Issues:

- *Number of eligibility claims involving overlaps with ACC for service-related injuries (2023–2025), including rates of transfers to ACC or denials.*
- *Details of current data-sharing agreements or identified gaps between VANZ and ACC, as noted in the 2019 Veterans' Advisory Board Interim Report.*

Any overlap of claims with ACC is managed on an individual basis. This information is not reported on, or recorded in a way that would enable the production of the requested information without manual analysis across a significant amount of information. This part of your request is therefore declined in accordance with section 18(f) of the OIA, as described above.

The VA website has information on information sharing between relevant government agencies⁹.

You have the right, under section 28(3) of the OIA, to ask an Ombudsman to review this response to your request. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Please note that responses to official information requests are proactively released where possible. This response to your request will be published shortly on the NZDF website.

Yours sincerely

GA Motley

Brigadier

Chief of Staff HQNZDF

⁹ <https://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/about-veterans-affairs/our-programmes/aisa/>