



Headquarters
New Zealand Defence Force
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New Zealand

OIA-2026-5810

27th
May 2026

Dear [REDACTED]

I refer to your email of 18 May 2026, seeking answers to the following questions:

What needs to happen and what would be the process to prepare a list of WW2 veterans who have unclaimed medals?

What was the process followed to come up with the list for the 28th Maori Battalion veterans? Could this be refined? Approximately how long did this take and an indication of what resources were committed to this project ie staff and financial? Did the records need to be digitised first?

Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

In 2021, in-depth research was carried out by the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) into how many Second World War campaign medals awarded to ex-serving New Zealand veterans were never claimed, and what may have led to this. At that time, it was estimated around 22,000 New Zealanders (around 15 percent of those who served overseas during the war) may never have applied for their medals.

This research was carried out after it came to light in 2020 that around 15 percent of the members of 28 (Māori) Battalion had not applied for their medals (approximately 500 individuals). Between 2021 and 2023, ceremonies were held and just over 400 families were presented with the medals issued to the whānau of those who had served in 28 (Māori) Battalion during the Second World War.

Regrettably issuing the remainder of the unclaimed Second World War medals, using a similar approach to that used for the 28 (Māori) Battalion kaupapa, would be impractical. In practice, this work is most effective and efficient when driven by veterans or their families through individual applications. This allows detailed family information to be provided and NZDF staff to assess and respond to the application. Applications from service people or their family are welcomed by the NZDF. For information on how to apply for medals, we encourage families to visit: <https://www.nzdf.mil.nz/heritage-and-education/medal-applications>.

In addition, replicating the 28 (Māori) Battalion kaupapa would require reprioritising staff from issuing medals to living veterans (currently serving and ex-Service) and to the families of deceased veterans who apply on their own initiative. Presently the current processing time for medals applications is up to 12 months from the date an application is received. To

replicate the 28 (Māori) Battalion kaupapa approach, each file of the approximately 140,000 personnel who served overseas during the Second World War would need to be retrieved, assessed, families identified and notified. In contrast, fewer than 3,600 files were assessed for the 28 (Māori) Battalion kaupapa.

The effectiveness of such a programme is also open to doubt. We do not hold current contact details for the families of New Zealand Second World War veterans and we would face significant difficulties in tracking them down, not least because around 10 percent of personnel serving in the NZDF at that time were either not born in New Zealand or the address of their parents/next of kin was overseas.

A copy of the 2021 report into the distribution of Campaign medals in New Zealand is available here: <https://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/assets/Documents/WW2-Medal-Distribution.pdf>.

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, with your personal information removed.

Yours sincerely

GA Motley

Brigadier

Chief of Staff HQNZDF