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OIA-2026-5841

16th July 2026

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

I refer to your email of 8 July 2026 to the Minister of Defence requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA), *'the consultation that has occurred throughout the development process of the bicultural policy in the armed forces that commenced in July 2023, as mentioned by the Minister in response to PWQ20221 and PWQ19114 (2026).'*

Your request was transferred to the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) for response in accordance with section 14(b)(i) of the OIA.

The Army Bicultural Policy (subsequently promulgated as the Ngāti Tūmatauenga Policy) was developed through an iterative process of policy development, consultation, governance oversight, cultural engagement, and legal review. Work on the Policy formally commenced in July 2023 with the assignment of a Staff Officer within Army General Staff (AGS) to undertake the task, and continued through to its promulgation in January 2026.

As such, development of the Policy did not occur through a single formal consultation activity. Rather, it occurred over an extended period through ongoing engagement with Army and NZDF personnel, commanders, cultural advisors, National Army Marae staff, participants in wānanga, Māori stakeholders, and Army governance bodies. Feedback was received through briefings, discussions, presentations, workshops, formal meetings, informal engagement, and correspondence, and was incorporated into the Policy as development progressed.

Updates on the draft Policy were provided to the Army Leadership Board (ALB) on multiple occasions during its development, and it was also reviewed by Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Tūmatauenga. The Rūnanga considered specific parts of the Policy in July 2025, and provided recommendations to the Chief of Army prior to final approval of the Policy.

Defence Legal Services and Crown Law engagement primarily related to Chapter 2 (Ngāti Tūtanga) – particularly the articulation of the history of The Treaty of Waitangi | Te Tiriti o Waitangi within the Whakapapa (Foundation) section of the Chapter. Feedback from that review informed amendments to Chapter 2 prior to its finalisation.

As the Policy was developed iteratively over an extended period, consultation feedback was not generally captured through a single consultation report or consolidated record of amendments. While records exist for key governance decisions, formal meetings, and policy milestones, much of the feedback was provided directly during engagement activities and incorporated into the working document as development progressed.

The Policy was approved by the Chief of Army in October 2025 and promulgated as Army General Orders – Personnel, Part 1 (Ngāti Tūmatauenga) on 28 January 2026. In February 2026, the Chief of Army directed that the Policy be withdrawn in order for aspects of it to undergo further review. Technical issues meant that it was not possible to withdraw only parts of the Policy from online publication.

The Policy is now undergoing further development by Staff Officers within AGS. Feedback on the first draft of the revised policy has been sought from personnel from within the Army and broader NZDF. Engagement has also occurred with Army Kaumatua, Te Puni Kōkiri and Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi regarding technical aspects of the Policy. This process is ongoing and will inform further development before the revised Policy is presented to the Chief of Army for consideration.

A summary of the Policy's progression is detailed in the table below:

Date	Lead	Summary
22 June 2022	ALB	The Chief of Army briefed the ALB on Marae Steering Group updates. The Steering Group noted the need to develop an NZ Army bicultural Policy aligned to the other Services and which meets NZDF requirements and obligations.
22 November 2022	ALB	Presentation on the Army Culture Plan provided to the ALB, covering broad organisational culture development (a standing task for Army General Staff). Development of an Army Bicultural Policy noted as a line of effort yet to be commenced.
1 July 2023	AGS	Staff Officer appointed to lead the development of the Army Bicultural Policy. Work on Policy formally commenced.
11 October 2023	ALB	Brief provided to the ALB on proposed Bicultural Policy Framework. The Board endorsed a phased approach to the development of the bicultural Policy.
14 March 2024	ALB	Update provided to the ALB on the review of National Army Marae procedures and protocols, governance and Kaitiakitanga within Ngāti Tūmatauenga – originally published in NZ Publication 6A - Ceremonial.
23 May 2024	ALB	Army Bicultural Policy draft material introduced to the ALB. First governance consultation on the draft Policy. The Board approved-in-principle the introductory paragraphs of the Policy, subject to legal review.
July 2024	ALB	ALB approved a new Section 2 (Ngāti Tūmatauenga) and Section 4 (Ngāti Tūtanga – Governance) for publication in the NZ Publication 6A – Ceremonial. The Board approved the Ngāti Tūmatauenga NZ Army Bicultural Framework with minor amendments.
4 December 2024	ALB	ALB endorsed the Army Bicultural Policy being renamed the Ngāti Tūmatauenga Policy, subject to further advice. The Board approved the NZ Army Bicultural Policy with two minor amendments, and directed it be published in Army General Orders – Personnel. The Board approved-in-principle that the cultural competency framework be included in the Orders.
December 2024 – July 2025	AGS	Following further discussion, technical advice was sought from Crown Law regarding the Whakapapa (Foundation) section of Chapter 2 (Ngāti Tūtanga) of the Policy, regarding articulation of the history of The Treaty of Waitangi Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
July 2025	Army Rūnanga	The Rūnanga reviewed the final draft of Chapter 2 (Ngāti Tūtanga) and provided advice to the Chief of Army on 12 September 2025.
15 September 2025	AGS	Sought Crown Law advice on the Rūnanga recommendations, and provided staff advice to the Chief of Army on 10 October 2025.
17 October 2025	Chief of Army	Approved Chapter 2 (Ngāti Tūtanga) and approved the publication of the full Policy in Army General Orders – Personnel no later than end January 2026.
28 January 2026	AGS	Policy published in the Army General Orders – Personnel, Part 1 (Ngāti Tūmatauenga).
20 February 2026	AGS	Policy removed from Army General Orders – Personnel at the Chief of Army's direction, for further review and development to occur.

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