

# **Briefing to the Incoming Minister for Veterans**

Presented to the Hon Meka Whaitiri  
November 2020

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# Part 1 - Introduction to Veterans' Affairs

Veterans' Affairs New Zealand provides support and services for veterans and their families.

It is a semi-autonomous unit of the New Zealand Defence Force, and part of the NZDF's People Capability Portfolio. Unlike the rest of the NZDF, it operates under the Veterans' Support Act 2014, rather than the Defence Act. The Chief of Defence Force delegates responsibility for the efficient administration of this legislation to the Head of Veterans' Affairs. The Act also allocates some specific statutory responsibilities to the Head of Veterans' Affairs—including the authority to determine individual claims for entitlements, services, and support.

This brief is an introduction to your portfolio, your ministerial responsibilities and key upcoming work. It also covers some of the challenges and the opportunities we see within the portfolio. We describe who we are, what we do, and how we can support you.

## The Veterans' Support Act 2014

For the past three years, the activities of Veterans' Affairs (VA) have been heavily influenced by an independent review of the operation of the legislation under which we operate.

The Veterans' Support Act 2014 (VSA14) came fully into operation in December 2015. It replaced the War Pensions Act 1954, and provided a more modern and appropriate way of supporting those who had been affected by their service in New Zealand's armed forces. The legislation gives a new emphasis to rehabilitation, and specifies the entitlements that veterans are eligible for if they are injured or become ill as a result of their service.

The Act included a requirement that its operation be reviewed after two years, and Professor Ron Paterson was appointed to do this review in 2017. He reported to the Chief of Defence Force in March 2018, and his report was tabled in Parliament in May of that year.

In response to the report, which made 64 recommendations, VA re-oriented its activities, and developed new approaches to begin to address those recommendations. There have been changes to policies and procedures, and changes also to the legislation under which VA operates, through the Veterans' Support Amendment Bill No 2 (2020). The changes made by that legislation came into effect on 1 October 2020.

Further changes to the Act are likely to be needed. These may be progressed during this new parliamentary term.

## Our veteran clients

The veterans who are VA's clients are the men and women who have served New Zealand at a time of war, or in operations overseas where they have been placed at risk of serious harm. Some were injured or made ill as a result of their service.

The average age of our clients is 80, and many were veterans of the Second World War, the Korean War, the Malayan Emergency, and the conflict in Vietnam. That situation is changing; the older veterans are decreasing in number, and "contemporary" veterans (those who have done operational service since 1974) are becoming more numerous as operational deployments of NZDF personnel continue.

Contemporary veterans have had different experiences, and have different needs, compared to the older veterans. They are likely to have served in a number of deployments during their career, and come to us with more complex health issues. Because most contemporary veterans still have many years of active life ahead of them, the support that this group receives focuses from the first on rehabilitation and independence. A rehabilitation strategy has been developed to meet these needs. An increasing number of younger veterans are taking advantage of this, as we work to increase the awareness of this group about the services, support, and entitlements we can provide to them.

## Our staff

We have a staff establishment of 78. The majority are client-facing (including case managers, rehabilitation advisers, a team that makes decisions on applications, a group that arranges payments of entitlements, and telephone enquiry staff). They are supported by small corporate, policy, and communications teams.

## Our strategic focus

VA has four areas for strategic focus:

- honouring the service of veterans, including enhancing services and support, and supporting commemorations;
- creating strong foundations for delivery, including identifying service improvements and emerging client needs;
- generating a sustainable workforce to deliver excellent client service; and
- partnering for greater effect—with other New Zealand government agencies, veterans' organisations, and international partners.

## The work that we do

COVID-19 is now the backdrop for all of our work. Over the last six months we have had to move quickly to respond to the changes this has brought about. New ways of engaging and communicating have been implemented. We have established a regular email newsletter (with uptake almost doubling from the start to the end of the lockdown); made personal phone calls to all vulnerable veteran clients; and arranged for Willie Apiata VC, to make videos in which he talks directly to veterans on the VA social media channel.

We have Alert Level safety plans and an updated Business Continuity Plan in place, so that our operational activities can continue, regardless of whether staff are working in the office or from their homes.

We'll be adapting further over the next few months by introducing some new ways of interacting with our clients. These will include virtual case management clinics, webinars in which we can talk directly to interested veterans who have questions for us, and the testing of simpler application processes. The aim of all of these moves is to build strong relationships with veterans, so they can connect easily and confidently with us, whether they have questions they want to have answered, or they want to apply for their entitlements.

Our "business as usual" work includes:

- Case management

We care for the needs of some 12,000 veterans, and almost 5000 of these are being actively case-managed. This involves our keeping in regular touch with them, and ensuring they receive the support and services they are entitled to. During the March-June COVID-19 lockdown, more than 8000 of our most vulnerable

veterans received at least one phone call from VA, to check on their wellbeing. A follow-up survey showed this had been helpful and appreciated.

- Administration of the Veterans' Independence Programme (VIP services)

This programme, which is delivered nationwide under Master Service Agreements, is designed to help veterans stay safe and independent in their own homes. When a need is identified, veterans can have access, at no charge, to services ranging from help with mowing their lawns, doing their gardens, housework, and personal care; to washing down houses and driveways, security alarms, podiatry, and making home alterations to increase accessibility.

- Developing policy advice on the veteran sector

As well as providing policy advice to you directly, we provide advice to other agencies and departments on matters relating to veterans. We're having input to a Ministry of Health review of burial and cremation legislation, and to information-sharing legislation proposed by the Department of Internal Affairs. We regularly make comment on Ministry of Social Development policy proposals when these could impact on veterans (including on COVID-19 emergency measures). We have advocated for a veteran question to be added to the census to help establish a baseline number of potential clients, and are currently working with the Ministry of Health to explore having a unique identifier for veterans included in medical records.

- Assistance with commemorations of significant military anniversaries

The Chief of Defence Force is responsible for organising all New Zealand overseas military commemorations including Gallipoli, and VA provides assistance through the NZDF coordinator, the Director of Heritage, Commemorations and Protocol. Domestic events are coordinated by the Visits and Ceremonial Office of the Department of Internal Affairs, with involvement from the NZDF (including VA) and the Ministry for Culture and Heritage.

- Work with non-government organisations that represent veterans

VA has regular contact with more than 20 veteran support and advocacy groups across New Zealand, the most significant of which is the Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association (RNZRSA). We administer Government grants to both the RNZRSA (which this year will receive \$2.78 million) and an organisation which focuses on supporting contemporary veterans, the No Duff Charitable Trust (which this year receives \$25,000).

These support partners are our "eyes and ears" in the community, and we place a lot of store on working closely with them. Our partners are able to bring veterans to VA, who might not otherwise access our services; and they're able to explain what VA can offer and how it can help, should veterans find the system confusing or be reluctant to use it.

- Maintenance of 183 services cemeteries throughout New Zealand, and providing memorials for those entitled to burial there

These cemeteries, located throughout New Zealand, are places where people with specified operational service and their spouse or partner can be buried. We work with local authorities, and provide grants to make sure the cemeteries are well-kept and honour those who are buried there. VA also covers the costs of plaques and headstones for eligible veterans who are interred in services cemeteries, and contributes to the cost of these if a veteran is buried elsewhere.

- Work with other Government agencies

We work operationally with a number of Government agencies, including:

- the Ministry of Social Development, which administers the Veteran's Pension on our behalf;

- the ACC, which provides entitlements, services, and support to veterans;
- the Ministry of Health, on veteran health issues, including treatment and health practitioner guidelines;
- the Department of Internal Affairs, on domestic commemorations of military significance;
- the Ministry for Culture and Heritage on services cemetery matters; and that Ministry, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, on offshore commemorations of military significance;
- the Inland Revenue Department, where we have an information-sharing agreement that enables us to quickly set levels for veterans' compensation payments; and
- the Department of Corrections, with which we are working to support imprisoned veterans once they have completed their sentences; and those who are already on VA rehabilitation plans at the time of their sentencing.

- Communicating with veteran clients

Communicating with our veteran clients is important and, as different parts of the veteran community have different communication preferences, we operate a variety of channels. Some like to talk with us face-to-face or by phone, through regular interaction with their case managers or at forums or expos in the community. Some prefer to deal with us in writing, through letters or emails.

Our website was refreshed and enhanced two years ago to make it more accessible and user-friendly and it was a finalist for a plain language website award in 2018. Entitlement information and operational policies are published there, and also other important papers. These include the *Veteran Rehabilitation Strategy*, and documents that summarise progress to address the undertakings that the Crown made to Vietnam veterans in 2006, and the more recent recommendations of the 2018 Paterson Review. Veterans can use an eligibility checker tool to confirm their eligibility for assistance. A Facebook page was launched in 2019. This is particularly popular with contemporary veteran males, in the 45–54 age group.

## Business process improvements

The business improvement programme we have under way aims to make it easier for veterans to:

- find out about the recognition, support, services, and entitlements that are available to them;
- make claims for entitlements and services; and
- receive prompt decisions about their claims.

Recent improvements include:

- more accessible information about the support that's available;
- streamlining of claim processes; and
- improved technology that makes it a lot quicker to obtain health information, and then decide on veterans' claims.

Planned improvements during 2020/2021 will include:

- further streamlining of claim processes;
- earlier opportunities for veterans to find out about their entitlements; and
- a major upgrade of the core system used for processing and paying veterans' claims.

A veterans' reference group is advising us about the sorts of changes that they would find helpful.

## Baseline Review

VA's funding is part of the NZDF baseline. In its 2019 baseline review of the NZDF, the Treasury endorsed VA's work to improve systems and make it easier for veteran clients to access the support they need. Funding of \$1.08 million over four years was approved in Budget 2020 for strategic IT planning and business transformation. This work is now under way.

## Our international relationships

VA's international liaison relationships are focused on sharing experiences, and developing an understanding of best practice in addressing the needs of veterans. There are no direct parallels between the operating environment in New Zealand (where the ACC and a strong public health system are dominant features) and those in other countries; but there are enough similarities to make these liaison relationships valuable and productive.

Co-operation (known as "Five Eyes co-operation") is in place between four Commonwealth countries (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom), and the United States. There are regular meetings of senior officials, and also of the Ministers of these countries who have responsibility for veterans' affairs. The most recent such meeting attended by New Zealand was in Sydney in 2018. Another meeting, scheduled for May 2020, was postponed because of the coronavirus pandemic.

A formal Statement of Intent between Five Eyes Ministers was signed in Sydney in 2018. The possibility of a separate Memorandum of Understanding on veteran matters at ministerial level between New Zealand and Canada was raised by the Canadian Minister in discussions with your predecessor during a visit to Ottawa in early 2020. This has not been progressed. We are, however, working on developing a working level MoU with Veterans' Affairs Canada that would facilitate exchanges on policy matters.

VA's closest international relationship is with the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) in Australia. Several hundred New Zealand veterans reside in Australia. Their entitlements are paid directly from New Zealand, and DVA acts as our agent in ensuring other services (such as medical services) are delivered to them. There are regular teleconferences between senior officials in the two countries.

VA also has a close relationship with its equivalent agency in the Republic of Korea. A Ministerial level meeting is due to be held there in November 2020. New Zealand is likely to be represented by a senior official based at the New Zealand Embassy in Seoul. We are preparing a separate briefing for you on this matter, and would appreciate an early opportunity to discuss this.

# Our work at a glance

\$75.8m annual budget



12,000+ clients  
4,700 actively case-managed  
3,800 conditions claimed



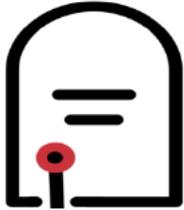
4,130 clients receive Veterans' Independence Programme home services



Our enquiry line team answers 30,000 phone calls a year



We have 2395 subscribers to our VA E-Newsletter



We help maintain 183 services cemeteries



We maintain a complete register of New Zealand Vietnam veterans



We hold case management clinics



We conduct forums and expos for serving and ex-serving veterans and their whānau



We have 78 FTE



Independent surveys in 2019 and 2020 showed 95% satisfaction with VA services and support

# Organisational structure

## Veterans' Affairs is part of the NZDF

Veterans' Affairs sits within the People Capability Portfolio of the NZDF.



Air Marshal Kevin Short  
**Chief of Defence Force**



Elizabeth Huckerby  
**Chief People Officer**

## Veterans' Affairs leadership

We have a small senior management team. These are the people you will likely see most often, but we will also make available other subject matter experts to brief or support you whenever this might be helpful.



Bernadine Mackenzie  
**Head of Veterans' Affairs**



Marti Eller  
**Deputy Head of VA**



Sharon Cavanagh  
**Manager Veterans' Services**



Elaine Myers-Davies  
**Project Manager**



Jo Elworthy  
**Principal Adviser**

# Part 2 – The Minister for Veterans

## Your responsibilities

The legislation which deals with your responsibilities as Minister for Veterans is, in the main, the VSA14, referred to on page 2 of this briefing. There are also responsibilities under section 15 of the Burial and Cremation Act 1964 (BCA64); and the Patriotic and Canteen Funds Act 1947.

We have listed below some of the areas relating to these statutory responsibilities that we will discuss with you regularly, or on which we will seek your decisions. We will provide detailed briefings to you when decisions need to be made on any of these matters.

### Declarations of qualifying operational service

Section 9 of the VSA14 states the role of the Minister in making declarations that deployments are operational service for the purposes of the Act.

When the Chief of Defence Force considers that a deployment has placed those serving in that deployment at risk of serious harm, he will recommend to you that you declare that deployment to be operational service under the VSA14. That declaration will qualify those who took part in the deployment for support from Veterans' Affairs, should they have been injured or become ill as a result of their service.

### Declarations to confer eligibility on service people and their spouses or partners for burial in services cemeteries

Section 15 of the BCA64 deals with services cemeteries, and who may be buried there. It specifies that the Minister for Veterans may declare eligibility for burial in these cemeteries following consultation with the Minister of Defence and the RNZRSA.

In practice, when the Chief of Defence Force recommends that you declare a deployment to be qualifying operational service, he will also recommend that those covered by that declaration, and their spouses or partners, should be eligible for burial in a services cemetery. We will prepare letters for you to use in consulting with the Minister of Defence and the RNZRSA on these matters. Once their comment has been received, a notice in your name, declaring eligibility for services cemetery burial, will be published in *The Gazette*.

### Decisions relating to Statements of Principles

Section 22 of the VSA14 specifies the use of decision-making tools called Statements of Principles (or SoPs) and the responsibilities of the Minister for Veterans relating to these.

SoPs are developed by the Australian Government Repatriation Medical Authority, based on extensive international research, and they are one of the mechanisms used by VA in New Zealand to determine whether specific types of injury or illness relate to a veteran's service. Three or four times each year we will bring to you a paper recommending changes to SoPs that are already being used in New Zealand by VA, or the application of new ones. You will need to take some of these to the Cabinet for their agreement, but you can approve minor changes to SoPs on your own authority.

## Decisions relating to presumed injuries, illnesses or conditions

Section 21 of the VSA14 describes the responsibility of the Minister for Veterans to specify injuries, illnesses or conditions that must be treated as service-related, and under what circumstances. In fact, however, these “presumptive lists” have been grandparented from the previous legislation. There are presumptive conditions for a number of earlier cohorts (including WW2 prisoners of war, Vietnam veterans, and veterans who may have been exposed to nuclear radiation); but in recent years, the SoP process has been the avenue for recognising any new research that associates illnesses or conditions with service.

## Appointments to independent statutory boards and trusts

There are three independent boards established under the VSA14, and Part 8 of the Act specifies their roles and the responsibilities of the Minister for Veterans in relation to them. VA provides administrative support to these three bodies.

The Minister appoints the Chair, Deputy Chair and members of

- the Veterans’ Entitlements Appeal Board
- the Veterans’ Advisory Board; and
- the Veterans’ Health Advisory Panel

In addition, the Minister appoints the chairperson of the Viet Nam Veterans and Their Families Trust. The other members of this Trust are appointed by the Minister of Internal Affairs, and Internal Affairs administers the Trust.

Details of these three boards are contained in Appendix 1 of this briefing.

## Decisions relating to the Patriotic and Canteen Funds Act 1947

You are responsible for the administration of the Patriotic and Canteens Act 1947. Given that few of the bodies covered by this Act are still in existence, we will be preparing advice to you on some options to consider, in particular whether it should now be repealed.

## Financial responsibilities

It is, of course, also your responsibility as Minister to seek appropriations relating to veterans within Vote Defence Force (in 2020/21 this totalled \$75.8 million); and Vote Social Development (in 2020/21 this totalled \$135.1 million). Further information on financial matters is provided in Appendix 2 of this briefing.

## How VA will support you

We will provide you with:

- a weekly briefing note to update you on recent and forthcoming events that relate to your portfolio;
- quarterly reports with more formal information about how we are tracking against our objectives and performance indicators;
- advice and briefing papers about a range of matters that bear on your portfolio;
- support for your portfolio secretary, ministerial adviser, and press secretary when veteran-related matters arise; and
- support at international meetings that you attend as Minister for Veterans.

We will also prepare any Cabinet papers dealing with veteran matters that you require.

In the past, we have had a standing arrangement to meet with the Minister each week. Our VA team is accompanied by others from the NZDF when matters which the NZDF is managing for you are to be discussed. NZDF, for example, is responsible for briefing you about significant overseas commemorations.

## Part 3 – Key issues

### The first three months

We would like to discuss the following matters with you at an early stage, as they cover areas you will need to be aware of, make a decision about, or take action on.

### Implementing changes to the Veterans' Support Act 2014

The Veterans' Support Amendment Bill No 2 was passed by the House on 30 July 2020. It amended the VSA14, and addresses a number of recommendations made in the 2018 Paterson Report. This has resulted in some changes to the Act that will have positive impacts on both veterans and their families.

The new provisions in the Act came into effect on 1 October 2020. We made the necessary changes to our processes ahead of time, so they could be implemented smoothly, and our staff have been fully briefed, and are able to give accurate advice to our veteran clients. We were in touch with a number of veteran support and advocacy groups while the bill was going through the House so they knew what would be changing; and we are using all of our communication channels to ensure that our veteran clients are informed about the new arrangements. We also briefed the RNZRSA's district support manager team, whose members help veterans to access their entitlements, so they have a good understanding of what has changed, and can give up-to-date guidance.

### Upcoming commemorations

The Chief of Defence Force is responsible for organising all New Zealand overseas military commemorations including Gallipoli. The programme of overseas commemorations is planned and coordinated with NZDF, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and the Ministry for Culture and Heritage. You will need to discuss ministerial attendance at the various commemorations with your colleagues.

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on New Zealand's military commemorative programme both in New Zealand and overseas. The 2020 Anzac Day commemoration at Gallipoli was cancelled, and a 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemoration for veterans of the Malaya Emergency, planned for August 2020, was postponed. At this stage Australian and New Zealand planning for Gallipoli 2021 involves a simple wreath-laying ceremony, organised by the respective embassies based in Ankara.

Commemoration events in Korea to mark the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean War were postponed earlier this year. They have been rescheduled for early November, but it is unlikely there will be many, if any, Ministers attending from overseas. New Zealand is likely to be represented by a senior official from the Embassy in Seoul. You may be asked to give approval to a communiqué that will be issued after the conference. We will brief you on this.

New Zealand domestic military commemorations are organised by the Visits and Ceremonial Office of the Department of Internal Affairs, with involvement from the NZDF and the Ministry for Culture and Heritage. The NZDF is still planning on supporting community Anzac Day activities in 2021, but the scale and nature of these will depend on circumstances closer to the time.

The NZDF Director of Heritage, Commemorations and Protocol will provide you with regular briefings on how arrangements for the commemorations are progressing.

From time to time you will also receive invitations to local-level ceremonies and commemorations.

## Responding to COVID-19

Being able to operate effectively for our clients in a COVID-19 environment is critical to maintaining our effectiveness.

Veterans across all age groups have been affected by COVID-19, and we are looking to set up arrangements as quickly as possible that can help to support them.

For those in the vulnerable age group of 70 plus, which comprises the majority of our clients, our work is directed towards creating situations that would enable them to seek information about entitlements, and make applications more directly, should a full or partial lockdown occur again. We noted during the March-June lockdown that the number of applications we received dropped dramatically. This was a reflection of the difficulty (or inability) of the veterans concerned to be able to visit their GPs, or to have personal contact with the advocates who typically assist them through the process. We are looking both to streamline the process of applying for support, and to cut out some of the steps which veterans have to currently complete; and also to arrange virtual contact opportunities (such as face to face Zooms with case managers, and webinars where VA staff can respond directly to questions that veterans may have).

At the other end of the veteran demographic, we are aware that a number of younger veterans have been hit hard by the tougher employment environment that has been a feature of the pandemic and may continue to be so. We are looking at ways to assist them into alternative employment.

We would like an early opportunity to brief you on these initiatives.

## New declarations of operational service

We have noted above that we will bring to you from time to time recommendations for new declarations of operational service. 9(2)(f)(iv)

## Strategic challenges

These are longer-term issues, many of which are linked. It would be helpful to discuss them with you, and to have your guidance on the policy matters you would like to progress.

## The definition of a veteran

Only a proportion of those who have served in the New Zealand armed forces are “veterans” as defined by the VSA14. The definition, and the associated legal entitlements, apply only to those who have taken part in qualifying operational deployments which have posed a risk of serious harm. Not all personnel who have served in the NZDF have undertaken such service.

The reasons behind the limited nature of the definition are not always well understood, and the situation is often interpreted as unfair and discriminatory. A call for an extension of the definition of “veteran” to include everyone who has ever served is frequently made by members of the service and ex-service community. One such call was made by the independent Veterans’ Advisory Board in a report to your predecessor in 2019.

9(2)(g)(i)

9(2)(g)(i)

Your predecessor as Minister asked officials to examine the implications of extending the legal definition of veteran. We are preparing a separate briefing for you on this topic.

## A possible military Covenant/Kawenata

The previous Minister for Veterans asked the Veterans' Advisory Board to canvass the views of New Zealanders about the possibility of establishing a Covenant or Kawenata between those who have served in the NZDF, and the Government and people of New Zealand. Several other countries have some form of covenant in place, including Australia and the UK. The intention of such a covenant would be to formalise undertakings by Government and citizens to those who have served and their families.

The Board sought submissions on this topic. Because their examination of the issue coincided with the COVID-19 lockdown, the consultation was conducted through representative and online surveys. The completed research indicated that, while the public does not have a lot of knowledge about service people and their lives, New Zealanders feel that there is a moral obligation for the country to support service people and their families.

The report concluded that a military Kawenata could benefit service people and their whānau, and that it is supported by the majority of New Zealanders.

9(2)(g)(i) and 9(2)(f)(iv)

## Data and information

There is very limited data available to VA about New Zealand's veteran population and, in particular, those vulnerable service personnel who could become VA clients in the future. This paucity of information has an impact not only on departmental planning, but also on research work.

We are keen to build an enhanced evidence base to help us to effectively identify and address veterans' needs. 9(2)(f)(iv)

We are preparing a separate briefing for you on this topic.

## Transitioning from the NZDF to Veterans' Affairs

Leaving service can be challenging, and we are working closely with the NZDF to make sure that eligible service personnel who have been identified as having urgent needs, including service-related illnesses or injuries managed by NZDF medical staff, can receive support from Veterans' Affairs.

Work is under way, in conjunction with the People and Health portfolios in the NZDF, to make the transition as smooth and user-friendly as possible. This includes improving portability of key data about the overall

veteran population, so we can make evidence-based decisions about their needs now and in the future. This will also help us plan our future workforce.

## Waitangi Tribunal Kaupapa inquiry

The Wai 2500 Māori Military Veterans Kaupapa Inquiry is being undertaken by the Waitangi Tribunal. Issues raised by claimants include discrimination, recognition, disproportionate risk of harm, inadequate care and rehabilitation, land alienation, farm settlement and economic opportunity, welfare and entitlements, and cultural practices. Many of the claims concern issues arising from service generally, and tend to involve the relationship of service personnel with the NZDF, rather than with VA.

In August 2020, Crown Law, supported by the NZDF, took the lead in presenting Crown evidence. VA also had input.

When we receive the Tribunal's response to the Crown's evidence, we will provide a separate briefing on this issue, and on any implications for veterans' support.

## Appropriation changes – long term liability funding approach

9(2)(i) and 9(2)(f)(iv) and 9(2)(g)(i)

## Vietnam veterans appropriation

New Zealand's involvement in the Vietnam conflict was controversial, and returning personnel faced a number of consequences for having fought in an unpopular war. To redress the resulting grievances, the Government and organisations representing Vietnam veterans signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2006, in which a number of undertakings were given. The following year an appropriation was established to fund support targeted specifically to the Vietnam cohort and their particular needs (which included dealing

with the effects of Agent Orange). A figure of approximately \$1 million annually is available to be used for making ex-gratia payments to Vietnam veterans and/or members of their family who have conditions known to be associated with service in Vietnam; and to provide annual comprehensive medical assessments for Vietnam veterans. It may also be used to monitor trends in the health and wellbeing of these veterans and their families.

While the intent of the appropriation is broad, in that it recognises special health needs of those who served in Vietnam, the scope, in practice is very limited, and does not fit today's wellness focus for these veterans.

9(2)(f)(iv)

## Mental health

Adverse experiences during active service often have negative impacts on veterans' health, employability, and social well-being when they leave active service. International literature suggests that up to one-sixth of deployed personnel could have some form of long-term mental health issue arising from experiences during deployment. Acknowledging the risks for this group, we prioritise these applications when we receive them.

We work closely with the NZDF Health Directorate and veteran advocacy groups to address veteran mental health needs. This work includes developing accessible mental health clinical pathways, raising awareness of mental health matters in the community generally, and enhancing the understanding by primary health providers (such as GPs) of veteran-specific issues and needs.

We are, however, an opt-in service, and we only know about those who approach us for help themselves, or who are referred to us by others in the community. The possibility of veterans with service-related mental health issues falling through the cracks remains a challenge, and it is one we are working to address.

## Part 4 – Voices of our clients ... ..

We have an independent survey conducted each year, so that veterans and their families can rate their level of satisfaction with the services they receive from VA, and the way that we treat them when they have dealings with us. For the last two years, overall satisfaction has been at 95 percent.

While these surveys are helpful, we also learn a lot from the unsolicited personal letters and emails we receive. They give a human perspective about the practical difference that the work that we do can make for those who we serve.

### From a terminally ill veteran

9(2)(a)

### From a veteran's child who received a Children's Bursary

9(2)(a)

### From a younger veteran being supported by a case manager

9(2)(a)

### From the 96 year old surviving spouse of a veteran

9(2)(a)

### From an 88 year old veteran

9(2)(a)

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<sup>1</sup> The company which provides lawn-mowing and gardening services to veterans

## Appendix 1

# Statutory and non-statutory bodies

## Veterans' Entitlements Appeal Board

The Veterans' Entitlements Appeal Board determines appeals by veterans and other claimants against reviewed decisions relating to their claims for entitlements under the Act.

The Board has four members, one of whom must be a lawyer who has at least seven years' standing who must be appointed as the Chairperson. Two of the members must be medical practitioners, one of whom must be nominated by the Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association.

Three members' terms expire on 21 April 2021, and the other expires on 10 December 2021.

**The Chair of the Board is Raewyn Anderson.**

## Veterans' Advisory Board

The Veterans' Advisory Board responds to requests from you for advice, and may initiate work on such things as policies relating to veterans' entitlements.

The Board's recent work has included reports to the Minister on repatriation policy for New Zealanders interred overseas as the result of military burial between 1948 and 1970; the definition of a "veteran" and how military service could be recognised; and New Zealanders' views about whether a military covenant (Kawenata) should be established in this country.

The Board has seven members and one serving veteran (ex-officio), nominated by the Chief of Defence Force.

The term of one Board member expires on 26 February 2021, and the terms of appointment for the remainder will expire on 31 July 2022.

**The Chair of the Board is Leith Comer.**

## Veterans' Health Advisory Panel

The Veterans' Health Advisory Panel provides you with advice and guidance on matters such as the impacts of service on veterans' health; and the relationship between qualifying operational service and impairment for the purpose of assessing eligibility to entitlements. It also decides how to allocate funds from the Veterans' Medical Research Trust Fund as grants and awards for research into contemporary veterans' health.

The Panel has ten members, including three ex-officio members: a medical practitioner nominated by the Chief of Defence Force, a medical practitioner nominated by Veterans' Affairs, and a representative of the Veterans' Advisory Board.

The terms of three members, including the Chair, are due to expire in 2021.

**The Chair of the Panel is Cathy O'Malley.**

## Viet Nam Veterans and their Families Trust

The Trust is a non-statutory organisation. It was established when the Government signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2007 with the Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association and the Ex-Viet Nam Services' Association.

The Government provided the Trust with capital of \$7 million for an initial 30-year period. The interest on that sum is available for the Trust to distribute. The Trust Deed requires repayment of the capital at the end of the 30-year period.

The Trust has four trustees and a Chair. The Chair is jointly appointed by the Minister for Veterans and the Minister of Defence. The trustees are appointed by the New Zealand Vietnam Veterans' Association and the Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association. The Trust is administered by the Department of Internal Affairs.

The term of the current Chair expires on 26 June 2023.

**The Chair of the Trust is Lindsay Pope.**

## Appendix 2

# Appropriations: Minister for Veterans

The appropriations in 2020/21 are \$210.9 million.

The Vote appropriation forecast spending for FY 2020/21 consists of the following outputs.

### Vote Defence Force – administered by Veterans' Affairs

Departmental Output Expenses	Administration Service	\$2.960 mil
	Policy Advice	\$0.230 mil
	Services and Payments to Veterans	\$7.105 mil
	Veterans Health Connect (COVID-19)	\$0.200 mil
Non-Departmental Output Expenses	Development and Maintenance of Services Cemeteries	\$0.746 mil
Non-Departmental Other Expenses	Ex-Gratia Payments and Comprehensive Medical Assessments for Vietnam Veterans	\$1.100 mil
	Veteran Assistance to Attend Commemorations and Revisit Battlefields	\$0.200 mil
	Fair Value Write Down on Veteran Trust Loans and Thirty-years endowment	\$0.203 mil
	Impairment of Debt for Benefits or Related Expenses	\$0.250 mil
	Grant Payments to Non-Government Organisations	\$0.275 mil
	Grant Payments to Non-Government Organisations ( COVID-19 one-off appropriation to RSA)	\$2.530 mil
	Service Cost-Veterans' Entitlements	\$20.00 mil
	Unwind of interest	\$40.00 mil
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$75.8 mil</b>

### Vote Social Development – administered by Ministry of Social Development

Departmental Output Expenses	Processing and Payment of Veteran's Pension	\$0.684 mil
Non-Departmental Benefits or Related Expenses	Veteran's Pension	\$134.430 mil
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$135.10</b>