



Cabinet

Minute of Decision

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Review of Veterans' Support Act 2014: Response to the Paterson Report

Portfolio **Veterans**

On 4 November 2019, following reference from the Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee (SWC), Cabinet:

- 1 **noted** that good progress has been made in responding to the Paterson Report recommendations with 26 already implemented, or with action to implement them under way, through more flexible use of policy and practice;
- 2 **noted** that the Minister for Veterans is proposing a two-stage approach to the Paterson Report recommendations with a Short-Term Improvements Programme (2019/20) to address priorities for veterans and provide immediate improvements in fairness and equity; and a Medium-Term Improvements Programme, beginning in 2020, to address more complex issues and provide sufficient time for a more thorough review of the Veterans' Support Act 2014;
- 3 **noted** that all of the 15 proposals contained in the Short-Term Improvements Programme would require amendment to the Veterans' Support Act 2014 and/or regulations;
- 4 **noted** that 13 proposals included in the Short-Term Improvements Programme respond to Paterson Report recommendations and relate to:
 - 4.1 giving Veterans' Affairs the ability to fund private mental health services until eligibility for public services is established;
 - 4.2 giving Veterans' Affairs the ability to fund treatment and rehabilitation services when a veteran is imprisoned;
 - 4.3 extending service access to families;
 - 4.4 modernising legislative decisions;
 - 4.5 extending the Children's Bursary;
 - 4.6 abolishing the five-year restriction on child-care assistance;
 - 4.7 continuing Veterans' Independence Programme support (VIP Services) when a veteran goes into care;
 - 4.8 easing access to Surviving Spouse or Partner Pension s.9(2)(f)(iv)

- 4.9 extending grace periods on death;
- 4.10 improving recognition of psychological illness;
- 4.11 allowing discretion to consider entitlement after brief AWOL or minor offending;
- 4.12 supporting spouses and families of imprisoned veterans; and
- 4.13 improving decision making;

- 5 **noted** that, in addition, approval is sought for legislative provision for the responsible Minister to be given discretion, for security or operational reasons, to declare operations to be Qualifying Operational Service without the requirement for those operations to be gazetted;
- 6 **agreed** that the proposals in paragraphs 4 and 5 above be approved for inclusion in a Veterans' Support Amendment Bill to be introduced in 2020;
- 7 **noted** that eight of the proposals have zero or negligible cost implications and that these proposals will be managed from current baselines;
- 8 **approved** the following changes to appropriations to give effect to the six policy decisions that require minor additional funding, with a corresponding impact on operating balance and core net Crown debt:

Vote Defence Force Minister for Veterans	\$m – increase/(decrease)				
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24 & Outyears
Benefits or Related Expenditure: Veterans' Support Entitlement	-	0.038	0.154	0.144	0.144
Benefits or Related Expenditure: Assessments, Treatment and Rehabilitation	-	0.025	0.101	0.102	0.102
Benefits or Related Expenditure: Veterans' Independence Programme	-	0.013	0.052	0.053	0.053
Total Operating	-	0.076	0.307	0.299	0.299

- 9 **agreed** that the expenses incurred under paragraph 8 above be charged against the Between-Budget contingency established as part of Budget 2019;

10 s.9(2)(f)(iv)

- 11 **agreed** to add the Veterans' Support Amendment Bill to the 2019 Legislation Programme with a category 5 priority (instructions to the Parliamentary Counsel Office in 2019);
- 12 **noted** that the Minister for Veterans will submit a bid seeking agreement to add the Veterans' Support Amendment Bill to the 2020 Legislation Programme with a category 2 priority (to be passed in 2020);

- 13 **noted** that, following Cabinet agreement to progress legislative change, drafting instructions will be sent to the Parliamentary Counsel Office requesting that a draft bill to amend the Veterans' Support Act 2014 be prepared for introduction by 1 April 2020.

Michael Webster
Secretary of the Cabinet

Hard-copy distribution:

Prime Minister
Deputy Prime Minister
Minister for Veterans

Proactively Released by the Minister for Veterans

Chair
Cabinet

REVIEW OF THE VETERANS' SUPPORT ACT 2014 – RESPONSE TO THE PATERSON REPORT

Proposal

1. This paper outlines progress in responding to the 64 recommendations made by Professor Ron Paterson following his 2017/18 review of the Veterans' Support Act 2014 (the Paterson Report). It notes that 26 of the recommendations have either been implemented through more flexible use of policy and practice, or action to implement them is under way.
2. The paper seeks the Committee's support for a two-stage approach to address the remaining recommendations with a Short-Term Improvements Programme (2019/20) to address priorities for veterans and provide immediate improvements in fairness and equity; and a Medium-Term Improvements Programme, beginning in 2020, to address more complex issues and provide sufficient time for a more thorough review of the Veterans' Support Act 2014.
3. Fourteen of the proposals in this paper respond directly to Paterson Report recommendations. This paper seeks the Committee's agreement to address 13 of these proposals through a priority amendment bill placed on the 2020 legislative programme. s.9(2)(f)(iv)
4. The paper also seeks the Committee's agreement to add a further legislative amendment that would allow the Minister discretion, on rare occasions and for reasons of national or operational security, to declare a deployment to be qualifying operational service without the need to publish a gazette notice. This would not change the criteria for Qualifying Operational Service.

Executive Summary

5. The Veterans' Support Act (the Act) that was passed in 2014 included a provision requiring the Chief of Defence Force to review it after two years to make sure it was operating as intended. That review was undertaken by Professor Ron Paterson. The report which he submitted to the Chief of Defence Force in April 2018 (the Paterson Report) made a total of 64 recommendations.
6. I am bringing two papers to this committee today. Both relate to Recommendations arising from the Paterson report.
7. This paper notes that a number of the Paterson recommendations have been followed up to date, and outlines further work that is proposed for the future. It seeks Cabinet support to amend the Act where this is needed to respond to those recommendations. The second paper being brought to this Committee comments specifically on action that has been taken to consider one of the

Paterson recommendations (Recommendation 63) which called for further work to examine the definition of veterans and how veterans should be recognised.

8. Of the 64 recommendations made in the Paterson report, 26 have either been actioned through more flexible use of policy and practice, or action to implement them is under way. A summary of progress to date on all of the Paterson Report recommendations can be found at the Annex to this report.
9. I am proposing a two-stage approach to the remaining recommendations. A Short-Term Improvements Programme (2019/20) would address priorities for veterans and provide immediate improvements in fairness and equity; and a Medium-Term Improvements Programme, beginning in 2020, would address more complex issues and provide sufficient time for a more thorough revision of the Act as required.
10. The Short-Term Improvements Programme will include a focus on:
 - a. improving access to services for veterans;
 - b. improving support for veterans' families;
 - c. end of life support for veterans and their families; and
 - d. removing unfair provisions of the Act.
11. As well as the proposals which respond directly to the Paterson report, I am making an additional proposal, seeking approval for the responsible Minister to have discretion, for reasons of national or operational security, to declare a deployment to be qualifying operational service without the need to publish a gazette notice. Cost for this change would be minimal. This proposal would not change the criteria for Qualifying Operational Service.
12. All of the 15 proposals made in this paper will require amendments to legislation and/or regulations. Agreement is therefore sought to prepare this legislation and accord to it 2020 legislative priority 5. This would require instructions to be given to Parliamentary Counsel by Christmas 2019 in order to have a draft Veterans' Support Amendment Bill ready for introduction by 1 April 2020.
13. Eight of the 15 proposals have zero or negligible cost implications and will be funded from current baselines¹. Six proposals require minor additional funding and between-Budget-Contingency (BBC) funding approval is sought for these.
14. s.9(2)(f)(iv)

¹ Of the eight proposals identified as having zero or negligible cost implications one is funded through Departmental Expenditure and seven through Benefit and Related Expenditure (BORE) appropriations.

Background

15. In March 2018 Professor Ron Paterson delivered a report entitled *Warrant of fitness: An Independent Review of the Veterans' Support Act 2014*. This contained 64 recommendations.
16. On 6 March 2019, I briefed this Committee in a paper entitled *Work plan in response to the review of the Veterans' Support Act 2014*², noting my intention to progress the development of a bill to replace the Act for consideration in the 2020/21 Legislative Programme. I have now reviewed the situation and decided not to proceed with a single large and complex programme of work at this stage.
17. The recommendations of the Paterson Report do not provide neat prescriptions for changes to legislation, policies, or practice. They range from public policy matters to legislative reform, and from process to operational matters. A number have already been actioned by administrative changes. Other recommendations have far reaching implications and will require considerable and complex policy work. A number will also require time for consultation with veterans' community representatives. I am also conscious that Professor Paterson considered that the drafting of the current Act had been undertaken in haste, and that the result was difficult for both veterans and those administering it. He recommended a more measured approach to review, streamline, and simplify the Act.
18. It is unreasonable, however, for the timeframe to implement all of the recommendations to be driven by those that are the most complex, and will take the longest to finalise. Veterans were consulted during the Paterson review, and it is not surprising that many have expectations that some of the resulting recommendations, that will benefit them, will be implemented quickly.

Planning the Next Phase

19. On this basis I have decided that a two stage approach is required.
20. A **Short-Term Improvements Programme** will include a series of proposals to address priorities for the veteran community and provide immediate improvements in fairness and equity. I am seeking Cabinet approval for the policy changes and associated funding; and for approval to introduce legislation to address a number of other issues, with Category 5 priority, and to pass that legislation in 2020.
21. A **Medium-Term Improvements Programme** will focus on issues that require more complex policy work and cannot be developed in time for the Short-Term Improvements Programme. These will include:
 - a. changes that might arise as a result of Veterans' Advisory Board recommendations;

- b. changes relating to statutory boards;
 - c. changes that might arise as a result of interface reviews taking place in other areas (including mental health, health and disabilities, ACC, New Zealand Superannuation, and social security);
 - d. changes to streamline and simplify the Act;
 - e. work to develop a veteran advocacy role for Veterans' Affairs; and
 - f. streamlining the process for adopting Australian Statements of Principles.
22. Work on the Medium-Term Improvements Programme will begin in earnest in 2020, once the Short-Term Improvements Programme has been actioned.

Short-Term Improvements Programme

23. Several items on this programme which would address recommendations of the Paterson Report can be actioned through changes to Veterans' Affairs policy and procedures. I have asked my officials to do this work as quickly as possible.
24. However, there are 15 proposals in the Short-Term Improvements Programme that would require legislative changes and some that require additional funding. They address entitlements of veterans under both of the Schemes that are part of the Act³.
25. A brief summary of each of the proposals follows.

(a) Proposals that would improve access to services for veterans

- i. *Giving Veterans' Affairs the ability to fund private mental health services, until eligibility for public services is established*
26. This issue was highlighted in Recommendation 3 of the Paterson report. A small number of veterans with acute mental health problems are referred to Veterans' Affairs each year. Delayed access to public health services can negatively impact on the veteran and their family.
27. It is proposed that, in crisis cases, following assessment and where appropriate, Veterans' Affairs would be able to develop a treatment plan and pay for services before eligibility is established. This proposal would affect both Scheme One and Scheme Two veterans.
28. Amendment would be required to sections 107 to 111 of the Act.
29. The proposal is estimated to affect 10-15 cases each year, with an estimated total cost of \$82,000 in 2022/23. The impact of this proposal will be reflected in Benefits or Related Expenses (BORE) appropriation, Assessments, Treatment and Rehabilitation.

³ Scheme One covers veterans who served in the New Zealand armed forces before 1 April 1974 (the date on which ACC legislation came into force) and who have qualifying routine or qualifying operational service. Scheme Two covers veterans who served after that date and who have qualifying operational service.

ii. Giving Veterans' Affairs the ability to fund treatment and rehabilitation services when a veteran is imprisoned

30. This issue was highlighted in Recommendation 3 of the Paterson report. Imprisoned veterans are not currently entitled to treatment and rehabilitation services funded by Veterans' Affairs. This means that services cease if a veteran with a treatment plan is imprisoned. While the Department of Corrections has a role in treatment and rehabilitation, in some cases they are not able to fund these, or there may be delays in services becoming available. Under ACC, however, prisoners retain access to treatment and rehabilitation services.
31. While Corrections is responsible for the treatment and rehabilitation of prisoners, it is proposed to extend the ability for Veterans' Affairs to continue to fund such services (in New Zealand and overseas) to ensure a smooth transition of responsibility to Corrections and avoid any disruption in service provision. It is also intended to involve Veterans' Affairs in pre-release to ensure that a smooth transitional plan is in place to assist successful reintegration back into the community. This proposal will affect both Scheme One and Scheme Two veterans.
32. Amendment would be required to section 29 of the Act.
33. This proposal will involve minimal cost as few veterans with plans are imprisoned. Any impact would be reflected in BORE appropriation, Assessments, Treatment and Rehabilitation.

(b) Proposals that would improve support for the families of veterans

i. Extending service access to families

34. This issue is highlighted in Paterson Report recommendations 1, 11, 12 and 13. Current provisions do not recognise the non-financial impacts that veterans' illness or injury have on their families, particularly mental health impacts.
35. It is proposed that families be included in needs assessments and rehabilitation support plans for veterans; and that counselling services be extended to qualifying veterans' families. This proposal will affect both Scheme One and Scheme Two veterans.
36. Amendments would be required to section 3(1) (a) of the Act and elsewhere to make specific reference to veterans "*and families*".
37. The proposal to extend the provision of services to families is estimated to cost between \$5,000 and \$20,000. Any impact would be reflected in BORE appropriation, Assessments, Treatment and Rehabilitation.

ii. Modernising legislative definitions

38. This issue is highlighted by Paterson Report recommendations 10, 16, 27 and 34. The definitions in the Act were modelled on those in the Accident Compensation Act 2001. They do not reflect the contemporary family unit, and current social and cultural concerns.
39. It is proposed that the definition of “child” in the Act be aligned with that in the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989, noting that the definition would need to specify the relationship to the veteran and not be limited to a child under 14. The Veterans’ Support Act would retain a system of age-related entitlements and would not make a distinction between child and young person. The definition of “dependant” will be reviewed to align with the modernised definition of child. The definition of “home” will also be reviewed to cover a wider range of living arrangements. This proposal would affect both Scheme One and Scheme Two veterans.
40. Amendments would be required to the Act to adopt these more contemporary definitions of child, dependant and household.
41. Adopting more contemporary definitions is expected to have minimal impact on cost given the low numbers of children of veterans. A 10 percent increase in numbers would increase costs by around \$50,000. Any impact would be reflected in BORE appropriation, Veterans’ Support Entitlement.

iii Extending the Children’s Bursary

42. This issue was highlighted by Paterson report recommendations 17(b) and 17 (c). The Children’s Bursary is currently available for veterans’ children undertaking tertiary study but not vocational training or children studying outside NZ.
43. It is proposed that the Children’s Bursary be extended to post-secondary vocational training and that it be made available on application to the children of veterans living overseas. This proposal will affect Scheme One only.
44. Amendment would be required to section 81 of the VS Act 2014.
45. The proposal is likely to entail minimal cost. If demand were to double, costs would still remain under \$25,000. Any cost impact would be reflected in BORE appropriation, Veterans’ Support Entitlement.

iv Abolishing the five year restriction on childcare assistance

46. This issue was highlighted by Paterson report recommendation 19. Currently childcare assistance is restricted to either five years or when the child turns 14, whichever comes first. The five year limit is overly restrictive and unfair, particularly if the child is still at school and the veteran is unable to care for them. The current provision aligns with the ACC Act. While this proposal would

remove the alignment, it is noted that this would not be inconsistent with the different scope and purpose of the Veterans' Support Act.⁴

47. It is proposed that the five year limitation on childcare assistance be removed, and Veterans' Affairs be given discretion to decide the appropriate period of payment. This proposal will affect Scheme Two only.
48. An amendment would be required to Schedule Two clause 66(2).
49. Costs are not expected to increase, but any cost implications will be reflected in BORE appropriation, Veterans' Support Entitlement.
- v. *Continuing Veterans' Independence Programme support (VIP Services) when veteran goes into care*
50. This issue was highlighted by Paterson Report recommendations 24 and 25. At present, household-related VIP services (for example lawn-mowing and section care) continue for the surviving spouse or partner for 12 months after a veteran dies, but cease when the veteran enters permanent care. Entering care is a difficult time for all involved, and a 12 month extension of VIP services for the veteran's household would provide support for the spouse or partner.
51. It is proposed that eligible spouses and partners may access VIP services, which do not relate directly to the veteran, for 12 months when a veteran enters permanent rest home or hospital care. This proposal will affect both Scheme One and Scheme Two.
52. Amendment would be required to sections 138 – 144 of the VS Act.
53. The annual increase in costs is estimated to be up to \$50,000. Any cost impacts will be reflected in BORE appropriation, Veterans' Independence Programme.

(c) Proposals to improve end of life support for veterans and their families

- i. *Easing access to Surviving Spouse or Partner Pension* s.9(2)(f)(iv)
54. This issue was highlighted in Paterson Report recommendations 14 and 21. At present, spouses or partners of Scheme One veterans are required to submit detailed applications for the Surviving Spouse or Partner Pension s.9(2)(f)(iv) at a very stressful time in their lives.
55. It is proposed that accessing the Surviving Spouse or Partner Pension and s.9(2)(f)(iv) be facilitated by extending entitlement immediately on notification of death where the veteran had qualifying operational service. This proposal will affect those with entitlements under Scheme One only.

⁴ The Veterans' Support Act 2014 was modelled on ACC legislation. Central to the Paterson review, however, is the special relationship between the State and those who have been harmed in their service to their country. While not a fundamental move away from the ACC legislation, some of the Paterson recommendations, and hence some of the proposals in this paper, would move the Veterans' Support Act out of alignment with the ACC legislation.

56. Amendments would be required to section 66 and sections 152–154 of the Act.

57. The cost implications would be minimal. The proposal does not change entitlement and Veterans' Affairs is currently liable for them. Any impacts would be reflected in BORE appropriation – Veterans' Support Entitlement.

ii. s.9(2)(f)(iv)

58. s.9(2)(f)(iv)

59. s.9(2)(f)(iv)

60. s.9(2)(f)(iv)

61. s.9(2)(f)(iv)

iii. *Extending grace periods for payments on death*

62. This issue was highlighted in Paterson Report recommendation 22. Currently the Disablement Pension continues for 28 days following the death of a veteran as do other periodic entitlements for Scheme One veterans. There is no equivalent provision for Scheme Two veterans. This is a legislative anomaly.

63. It is proposed that other periodic entitlements would also continue for 28 days after a Scheme Two veteran dies.

64. Amendment would be required to sections 100–104 of the Act.

65. The cost is estimated to be up to \$100,000 annually. Cost impacts will be reflected in BORE appropriation, Veterans' Support Entitlement.

(d) Proposals to remove unfair provisions in the Act

i. Improving recognition of psychological illness

66. This issue was highlighted in Paterson Report recommendation 38. Current provisions recognise psychological injury or death attributed to service but not psychological illness.

67. It is proposed that section 28(2) (a) of the Act be amended to better recognise psychological illness conditions that are attributed to, or aggravated by, qualifying service. This proposal will affect Scheme One and Scheme Two veterans.

68. The cost implications are estimated to be minimal. The proposal addresses a minor legislative anomaly. Any impact would be reflected in BORE appropriation, Assessments, Treatment and Rehabilitation.

ii. Allowing discretion to consider entitlement after brief AWOL or minor offending

69. This issue was highlighted in Paterson Report recommendation 37. Current provisions exclude cover where a claimant was Absent-Without-Leave, or committing an offence, at the time when the injury, illness or death occurred. The Paterson Report noted that this could be unfair when a period of absence was brief and offending was minor. It could result in an adverse impact on the veteran's family.

70. It is proposed that section 28(1)(b)(c) of the Act be amended to cover situations where Veterans' Affairs considers it unjust to exclude entitlement where a claimant was briefly Absent without Leave, or committing a minor offence.

71. The cost is likely to be minimal. The issue arises very infrequently. Any impact would be reflected in BORE appropriation, Veterans Support Entitlement.

iii Supporting spouses or partners and families of imprisoned veterans

72. This issue was highlighted in Paterson Report recommendation 39. Currently veterans' families lose access to the veteran's entitlements and support as a result of the veteran's offending and imprisonment. This was probably a drafting oversight and is unfair.

73. It is proposed that the legislation be amended to clarify that spouses or partners and children or dependents will not be denied entitlements by virtue of a veteran's imprisonment.

74. Amendment would be required to section 29 of the Act.

75. Cost impacts are likely to be minimal. The issue arises very infrequently. Any impact would be reflected in BORE appropriation, Veterans' Support Entitlement.

iv Improving decision making

76. These issues were highlighted by Paterson Report recommendations 33 and 49. The Act currently provides for reconsideration of Veterans' Affairs decisions, but does not specifically provide for reconsideration when new information comes to light. It also stipulates that Veterans' Affairs must respond to claims in a timely manner which is identified as 30 working days. VA has always had difficulty meeting the deadline because many decisions require time to gather information to back a decision. The 30 day limit is arbitrary and can encourage speed as opposed to accuracy in decision-making.
77. It is proposed that Veterans' Affairs be enabled to reconsider a decision where significant new information comes to light that is likely to materially affect the decision; and that the specification of a 30 working day response time be replaced with a requirement for Veterans' Affairs to make decisions as quickly and as reasonably as practicable. These proposals will affect Scheme One and Scheme Two.
78. Amendment would be required to sections 11 and 205 of the Act.
79. No cost impact is estimated and any change will be managed through existing departmental expenditure.

Proposal to Give the Responsible Minister Discretion to Declare Non-Gazetted Deployments as Qualifying Operational Service

80. I am also proposing that one further change, not identified in the Paterson Report, should also be actioned now through legislative change.
81. I am seeking Cabinet approval to include in the legislation an amendment to section 9 of the Act. This amendment would provide the responsible Minister with discretion to approve the granting of entitlements in respect of a very small group of service personnel who undertake service in operations that, for security or operational reasons, are not gazetted.
82. Currently the Act requires the Minister to declare deployments to be qualifying operational service by way of gazette notice. On the rare occasions where, for various legitimate reasons, qualifying operational service cannot be gazetted, some individuals who participated in those deployments are not able to access entitlements.
83. To address this issue it is proposed that the Minister have discretion, in circumstances involving reasons of national or operational security, to declare a deployment as qualifying operational service without the need for a gazette notice. This will allow for individuals who served on such deployments to access entitlements, where they cannot currently. The proposal will affect Scheme Two veterans only. It would not change the criteria for Qualifying Operational Service.
84. An amendment would be required to section 9 of the Act.

85. The change is estimated to involve minimal cost. Very few cases arise each year. Any impact would be reflected in BORE appropriation, Veterans' Support Entitlement.

Legislative Requirements

86. All 15 of the proposals detailed above would require amendments to the Veterans' Support Act 2014 and/or accompanying regulations. I am seeking Cabinet support to introduce a Veterans' Support Amendment Bill in April 2020 and have it pass through all stages before the House rises for the election. The implementation date for the new provisions would be 1 April 2021.
87. The Parliamentary Counsel Office has indicated that if drafting instructions are received by Christmas 2019, and the bill is not complex or lengthy, a certified draft bill can be prepared by the start of April 2020. The amendments required are not considered complex.
88. I recommend that the Parliamentary Counsel Office be authorised to draft amendment legislation that would cover the eight proposals that have zero or negligible cost implications that will be funded from current baselines, and the six proposals that involve minimal additional funding where between-Budget-Contingency funding approval is sought.
89. s.9(2)(f)(iv)

Consultation

90. There has been departmental consultation on this paper and the development of the Short-Term Improvements Programme with the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Parliamentary Counsel Office, the Treasury, the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment, the Accident Compensation Corporation, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social Development, Department of Corrections, and Te Puni Kokiri.

Financial Implications

91. Eight of the proposals to change policy contained in the Short-Term Improvements programme have zero, or negligible cost implications and will be funded from current baselines.

92. Six of the proposals have minor financial implications, with additional funding needing to be sought from Cabinet. The financial implications are set out in the table below.

	\$m – increase/(decrease)				
Vote Defence Force appropriation / initiative	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24 & Outyears
<i>Veterans' Support Entitlement</i>					
• Modernising legislative definitions	-	0.011	0.044	0.041	0.041
• Extending the Children's Bursary	-	0.005	0.022	0.021	0.021
• Extending grace periods for payments on death	-	0.022	0.088	0.082	0.082
<i>Assessments, Treatment and Rehabilitation</i>					
• Ability to fund private mental health services, until eligibility for public services is established	-	0.020	0.081	0.082	0.082
• Extending service access to families	-	0.005	0.020	0.020	0.020
<i>Veterans' Independence Programme</i>					
• Continuing VIP Services when veteran goes into care	-	0.013	0.052	0.053	0.053
Total	-	0.076	0.307	0.299	0.299

93. Between-Budget-Contingency funding approval is sought for the six proposals contained in the chart above that require minimal additional funding. This will allow these to be included in drafting instructions to Parliamentary Counsel in December 2019 in order to produce a Veterans Support Amendment Bill by April 2020.

94. s.9(2)(f)(iv)

95. s.9(2)(f)(iv)

Impact Analysis

96. The Regulatory Impact Team at the Treasury has assessed the proposals contained in the Short-Term Improvements Programme. s.9(2)(f)(iv)

Publicity

97. There is wide interest in the New Zealand veteran community in the Government's response to the Paterson report. Depending on the Cabinet response to this paper, a press release on the general approach would be released. A draft release has been prepared and is at Annex A. This would cover an announcement of Cabinet decisions relating to both this paper and the second paper being brought to this committee, which relates to the definition of the term veteran and recognition of veterans.

Proactive Release

98. I intend to release this paper in full, apart from any legally privileged material, or other redactions as required under the Official Information Act 1982.

Gender and Disability Implications

99. The proposed amendments are policy neutral and do not have any gender or disability implications.

Recommendations

100. It is recommended that the Committee:

1. **note** that good progress has been made in responding to the Paterson Report recommendations with 26 already implemented, or with action to

implement them under way, through more flexible use of policy and practice;

2. **note** that I am proposing a two-stage approach to the Paterson Report recommendations with a Short-Term Improvements Programme (2019/20) to address priorities for veterans and provide immediate improvements in fairness and equity; and a Medium-Term Improvements Programme, beginning in 2020, to address more complex issues and provide sufficient time for a more thorough review of the Veterans' Support Act 2014;
3. **note** that all of the 15 proposals contained in the Short-Term Improvements Programme would require amendment to the Veterans' Support Act 2014 and/or regulations;
4. **note** that 13 proposals included in the Short-Term Improvements Programme respond to Paterson Report recommendations and relate to:
 - a. giving Veterans' Affairs the ability to fund private mental health services until eligibility for public services is established;
 - b. giving Veterans' Affairs the ability to fund treatment and rehabilitation services when a veteran is imprisoned;
 - c. extending service access to families;
 - d. modernising legislative decisions;
 - e. extending the Children's Bursary;
 - f. abolishing the five-year restriction on child-care assistance;
 - g. continuing Veterans' Independence Programme support (VIP Services) when a veteran goes into care;
 - h. easing access to Surviving Spouse or Partner Pension s.9(2)(f)(iv)
 - i. extending grace periods on death;
 - j. improving recognition of psychological illness;
 - k. allowing discretion to consider entitlement after brief AWOL or minor offending;
 - l. supporting spouses and families of imprisoned veterans; and
 - m. improving decision making;
5. **note** that, in addition, approval is sought for legislative provision for the responsible Minister to be given discretion, for security or operational reasons, to declare operations to be Qualifying Operational Service without the requirement for those operations to be gazetted;

6. **agree** that the proposals in recommendation 4 and 5 above be approved for inclusion in a Veterans' Support Amendment Bill to be introduced in 2020;
7. **note** that eight of the proposals have zero or negligible cost implications and that these proposals will be managed from current baselines;
8. **approve** the following changes to appropriations to give effect to the six policy decisions that require minor additional funding, with a corresponding impact on operating balance and core net Crown debt:

Vote Defence Force Minister for Veterans	\$m – increase/(decrease)				
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24 & Outyears
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Benefits or Related Expenditure: Veterans' Independence Programme	-	0.013	0.052	0.053	0.053
Total Operating	-	0.076	0.307	0.299	0.299

9. **agree** that the expenses incurred under recommendation 8 above be charged against the Between-Budget contingency established as part of Budget 2019;
10. **s.9(2)(f)(iv)**
11. **agree** to add the Veterans' Support Amendment Bill to the 2019/20 Legislation Programme with a Category 5 priority (must be introduced and passed in 2020);

12. **note** that, following Cabinet agreement to progress legislative change, drafting instructions will be sent to the Parliamentary Counsel Office requesting that a draft bill to amend the Veterans' Support Act 2014 be prepared for introduction by 1 April 2020.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Ron Mark
Minister for Veterans

Proactively Released by the Minister for Veterans

Annex A: Draft Public Statement

This statement would reflect Cabinet decisions on two complementary papers dealing with matters that arose from the 2018 Paterson Report: one that includes a number of legislative amendments planned for 2020, and a second that considers the definition and recognition of veterans.

In 2018, Professor Ron Paterson reported on his review of the operation of the Veterans' Support Act 2014. He recommended a number of improvements to ensure that New Zealand's veterans get the best possible support.

A number of his recommendations have been actioned already by Veterans' Affairs through changes in their policies and procedures. However, there were other issues that could only be resolved through changes to the law.

I am pleased to announce that Cabinet has today agreed that an amendment bill will be brought to the House in 2020 to address a number of the Paterson recommendations—those which will have the most immediate impact on the lives of our veterans. These will include.....

Professor Paterson made some other, more complex, recommendations that cannot be dealt with through this simple amendment bill. Amongst these is the question of who should be a veteran and how their service should be recognised. I asked the Veterans' Advisory Board to examine this matter. I have now received their interim report and it makes some strong recommendations. The Board considers that the definition of "veteran" should be expanded to include all who have served, and that all should receive services and support, on the basis of need, if they have been injured or made ill by their service in the armed forces, irrespective of where that service took place.

That is a substantial change to the current situation in New Zealand, and for that reason, any action on it will need to await a major change to the legislation. It would significantly increase the number considered to be veterans, and far outstrip the resources which Veterans' Affairs has to provide support and services. The Board recognises these implications and has recommended that further work needs to be done to establish exactly what the change would mean and, if it were to go ahead, how it could be managed. I agree, and I am asking my officials in the New Zealand Defence Force and Veterans' Affairs to do that work. It will include a demographic analysis and actuarial costing of the sorts of scenarios for veteran recognition that the Board has detailed.

The Board has also recommended better transition arrangements to assist those transitioning from the New Zealand Defence Force to civilian life and, in particular, the establishment of a navigator service that will help to identify and access the entitlements and support these men and women need. I am directing my officials to follow up on this recommendation as well.

Most importantly, I am asking the Veterans' Advisory Board to do some follow-up work on one of the recommendations that they made. They called for a Covenant to be set in place between Service personnel and the Government and people of New Zealand. Such Covenants are in place in a number of other countries, and they formalise an undertaking that those who serve, and their families, should not be

disadvantaged by service. I have asked the Board to “take the temperature” of New Zealand on this matter, and to report back to me by 31 July 2020.

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Annex B – Summary of Progress on the Paterson Report recommendations

Summary of Progress on the Paterson Report recommendations

October 2019

The Paterson review made 64 recommendations. The recommendations do not provide neat prescriptions for changes to legislation, policies, or practice. Recommendations can be addressed in more than one proposal. Some will have already been actioned in part with further consideration occurring in either the Short-Term or Medium-Term Improvement Programmes. A high level summary of the current status of all recommendations is as follows:

Actioned or underway

Of the 64 recommendations, 26 have either been actioned in whole or in part through more flexible use of policy and practice, or action to implement them is underway, or a decision was taken not to proceed with them.

Short-Term Improvement Programme 2019/20

A group of 21 recommendations that required further policy work and/or legislative amendment are being addressed as part of the Short-Term Improvement Programme as outlined in this paper.

Medium-Term Improvement programme – post 2020

There are 18 recommendations which have been deferred for consideration in a Medium-Term Improvement Programme that will begin in 2020 once the Short-Term Improvement Programme has been completed. These recommendations involve:

- changes that might arise as a result of Veterans' Advisory Board recommendations;
- changes relating to statutory boards;
- changes that might arise as a result of interface reviews taking place in other areas (including mental health, health and disabilities, ACC, New Zealand Superannuation, and social security);
- changes to streamline and simplify the Act;
- work to develop a veteran advocacy role for Veterans' Affairs; and
- stream-lining the process for adopting Australian Statements of Principles.

A table with a more detailed summary of progress in relation to each of the Paterson recommendations follows:

Status of Paterson Review Recommendations: October 2019	
RECOMMENDATION	DECISION/ ACTION TO ADDRESS
1. The Act is amended so Veterans' Affairs has more flexibility to meet individual and family needs, including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> the ability to offer a range of treatments, rehabilitation approaches and supports; and discretion to offer more or different services and culturally appropriate support. 	SHORT-TERM IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME Included in policy development programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resource for policy and legislation programme was allocated in Budget 2019. For the 2019/20 year the focus will be on ensuring fairness and consistency across the Act. There will be consultation before more substantial changes are made to eligibility and entitlements. To date <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Veterans' Affairs now offers treatment "up front" for claimants with mental health issues to minimise harm of waiting for decisions. Veterans' Affairs policy has been amended to allow non-standard treatment where a medical practitioner recommends this and NZ health guidelines are followed. Veterans' Affairs has investigated and funded flexible access to accredited programmes for social rehabilitation (including Art Therapy and Outward Bound courses).
2. Veterans' Affairs is given funding to establish a flexible fund so that it can develop and offer programmes, services and supports in addition to those provided through the Act.	MEDIUM-TERM IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Veterans' Affairs has recommended that the same result can be achieved by greater flexibility of practice, policy and amendments to legislation. Funding for treatment is not constrained.
3. The treatment and rehabilitation provisions of the Act are made consistent and flexible, to ensure that early intervention and an appropriate continuum of care can be delivered.	SHORT-TERM IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Veteran Rehabilitation Strategy was launched in May 2018. Resource for policy and legislation programme was allocated in Budget 2019.
4. Flexible early intervention support is made available to veterans in emergency, acute or otherwise serious situations, before the presence of a service-related condition is confirmed.	SHORT-TERM IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Veterans' Affairs has developed protocols to ensure that emergency support is accessible. This has been tested with successful outcomes. Urgent entitlement decisions are made for veterans who are terminally ill. MSD and Veterans' Affairs have an agreed process to ensure emergency support is available. Veterans' Affairs and veteran advocacy groups have an agreed process for managing acute cases.
5. Veterans' Affairs takes a holistic and integrated approach to meeting veterans' needs, including providing wrap-around support to the greatest extent possible.	ACTIONED OR UNDER WAY To date <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This recommendation has been incorporated in the Rehabilitation Strategy. Further changes will be driven by measuring results and amending practice. There has been work on development and implementation of rehabilitation strategy with core partners. There is ongoing monitoring of results for veterans (return to work, social rehabilitation goals)

Status of Paterson Review Recommendations: October 2019	
6. Veterans' Affairs is enabled to provide integrated packages of care where a veteran has high and complex needs.	ACTIONED OR UNDER WAY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Rehabilitation Strategy lays out how care will be integrated.
7. Veterans' Affairs is mandated and resourced to be the single point of contact for veteran-focused services and supports for those veterans with the highest and most complex needs.	MEDIUM-TERM IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME Veterans' Affairs has established MoUs with NZDF Health and ACC to act as the single point of contact where that is in the veteran's interest. Further work will be dependent on outcome of other Government work including decisions on Veterans' Advisory Board recommendations.
8. Veterans' Affairs consults family members about their needs and how they could best be met in preparation for service development and legislative changes.	COMPLETED OR UNDER WAY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This practice has been implemented. Families are invited to clinics, expos and forums.
9. New family supports are funded, at least initially, through the flexible fund established outside the Act (see recommendation 2 above).	MEDIUM-TERM IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy work is required. Veterans' Affairs has recommended that the same result can be achieved by greater flexibility of practice, policy and amendments to legislation.
10. The Act is changed to explicitly provide for consideration of families' needs and practical, flexible support for family members (either through a new addition to the Act or amendment of existing provisions).	SHORT-TERM IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME Extended family support will be addressed in both proposed (2020) amendments to legislation and any extended changes.
11. Families are included in, or offered, separate needs assessments and rehabilitation/support plans.	SHORT-TERM IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME This change is part of the 2020 amendment package.
12. Carer relief and other support for family carers is implemented as a matter of priority.	MEDIUM-TERM IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME On hold - to be considered following any redevelopment of the National Carer Strategy. The Government is reviewing support for all family carers. This will guide any specific interventions for veterans and their families.
13. Counselling is made available to veterans' family members for needs related in any way to the veteran's service, although limits may apply.	MEDIUM-TERM IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME This is available already for families of some veterans.
14. Eligibility for the surviving spouse or partner pension is simplified by extending it either to all surviving spouses or partners of Scheme One veterans, or to all surviving spouses or partners of Scheme One veterans with qualifying operational service, and retaining existing eligibility criteria for veterans with routine service.	SHORT-TERM IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME Work of the Veterans' Advisory Board could be relevant.
15. The surviving spouse or partner pension is available to the surviving spouse or partner for the remainder of his or her life (it currently ends two years after remarriage/ repartnering)	MEDIUM-TERM IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME Pending recommendations of the Veterans' Advisory Board and further decisions and policy work.

Status of Paterson Review Recommendations: October 2019	
16. The definition of "child" in Part 1 of the Act is amended to better reflect the contemporary family unit in New Zealand, either by an expanded definition or by adding a sub-clause to the existing definition, to include any other dependent child who is being maintained, including financially, as part of a veteran's family.	SHORT-TERM IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME This change is part of the 2020 amendment package.
17. The children's bursary is extended to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. children of Scheme Two veterans b. a broader range of unpaid study or training, such as vocational training c. children of veterans living overseas. 	SHORT-TERM IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME Included in policy development programme; recommendations of Veterans' Advisory Board could be relevant. Extension of bursary to cover vocational training and the children of veterans overseas is part of the 2020 package.
18. Consideration is given to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. extending the children's bursary to primary school children b. allowing postponing use of the bursary in order to take a short break from studying, or alternatively, extending the bursary to people up to 25. 	MEDIUM-TERM IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME A: On hold pending recommendations of Veterans' Advisory Board and further policy work. ACTIONED OR UNDER WAY B: Agreed and actioned - a more flexible policy has been adopted.
19. Childcare payments under Scheme Two are available until a child turns 14.	SHORT-TERM IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME This change is part of the 2020 amendment package.
20. Eligibility for the funeral grant is aligned with simplified criteria for accessing the surviving spouse or partner pension (see recommendation 14 above).	SHORT-TERM IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME Action has been deferred pending the current review of the Burials and Cremations Act. This is intended to modernise and allow for a wider range of funeral practices.
21. The funeral grant for veterans is increased so it is at least equal to ACC's funeral grant for death from a covered injury, and that its value is maintained over time, including through CPI-adjusted increases.	s.9(2)(f)(iv)
22. The Act is amended to make it clear that periodic entitlements continue for 28 days after a recipient's death in those sections of the Act where there is currently no such provision.	SHORT-TERM IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME This is part of the proposed 2020 legislative package.
23. Veterans' Affairs considers whether the Act should explicitly allow estates to progress to determination a claim or review lodged by a now deceased applicant.	ACTIONED OR UNDER WAY Applications for terminal lump sums are progressed to determination and payment following death of the applicant.
24. The Act is amended so partners and spouses are eligible to access Veteran's Independence Programme services after a veteran dies or goes into rest home or hospital care.	SHORT-TERM IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME To be addressed in proposed 2020 legislative programme and by changes in policy and practice.
25. Veterans' Affairs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. decides whether to extend services to a partner or spouse on the basis of their needs, taking into account tasks a veteran used to perform and did not claim for 	SHORT-TERM IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME To be addressed in proposed 2020 legislative programme and by changes in policy and practice.

Status of Paterson Review Recommendations: October 2019	
b. helps a partner or spouse, when necessary, to find alternative funders of these services.	
26. The purpose of the Veterans' Independence Programme is expanded so veterans can receive help to "live independently in their own home and participate in their community".	ACTIONED OR UNDER WAY Drive and path spraying, garden agreements and alternative services to address local needs have been added to the current agreements for service.
27. The definition of "home" in the Act is updated to allow for a wider range of living arrangements.	SHORT-TERM IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME This is included in the 2020 legislative programme.
28. Veterans' Affairs consults veterans and their families about the range of services that would most help them maintain their independence and participation in the community, in order to determine the areas of greatest need.	ACTIONED OR UNDER WAY The practice has been implemented (see 8).
29. Veterans' Affairs expands the range of support services to enable independent living, and ensures a flexible, individually tailored approach to providing these services.	ACTIONED OR UNDER WAY This has been agreed and actioned (see 26).
30. The travel allowance and travel concession are combined into a single grant covering travel for both errands and social activities.	SHORT-TERM IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME Policy work is required.
31. Veterans' Affairs writes a plain English guide to the Act for veterans.	SHORT-TERM IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME In the interim the Veterans' Affairs website has been revised for improved accessibility.
32. The Act is streamlined and simplified by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> combining common provisions removing sections that don't need to be in the legislation or regulations making a number of clarificatory and technical amendments providing more flexibility and discretion for Veterans' Affairs, so it can meet the needs of current and future veterans and families allowing for current and future digital technologies. 	MEDIUM-TERM IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME Extensive change or revision of the Veterans' Support Act might be considered following further policy work and the outcome of the report of the Veterans' Advisory Board.
33. Section 205 of the Act is amended to make clear Veterans' Affairs can at any time reconsider a decision about an application made under the Act if it has made an error or significant new information comes to light that is likely to materially affect the decision.	SHORT-TERM IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME This is included in the 2020 legislative programme.
34. Section 3(a) of the Act is amended to include families and to read: "the rehabilitation of and support for veterans and their families, where a veteran has been injured or become ill as a result of being placed in harm's way in the service of New Zealand".	MEDIUM-TERM IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME This requires further policy development.
35. Veterans' Affairs reminds staff of the spirit of the Code of Veterans' and Other Claimants' Rights.	ACTIONED OR UNDER WAY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This has been included in the Veterans' Affairs training plan for all staff and in its induction pack.

Status of Paterson Review Recommendations: October 2019	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A plan to further promote the Code to veterans has been developed.
36. A new statutory principle recognising a moral duty of care to veterans is included in the Act.	MEDIUM-TERM IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME Further policy work will be required.
37. Section 28(2) of the Act is amended by adding a further exception, (c), to cover situations where Veterans' Affairs is satisfied on reasonable grounds that it would be unjust to exclude cover solely because the claimant was briefly absent without leave or committing a minor offence.	SHORT-TERM IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME This is included in the 2020 legislative programme.
38. Section 28(2)(b) of the Act is amended to read: "the illness, injury or death was due to or is a psychological condition that was attributed to or aggravated by the experiences of the veteran during qualifying operational service".	MEDIUM-TERM IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME Further policy work is required.
39. Section 29 of the Act is revised to clarify that dependants of a veteran are not, by virtue only of the veteran's imprisonment, to be denied any entitlements for which they would otherwise qualify.	SHORT-TERM IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME This is included in the 2020 legislative programme.
40. The Government considers either ring-fencing Veterans' Affairs' budget or establishing a separate funding vote for Veterans' Affairs.	MEDIUM-TERM IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME This has not been agreed at this stage, and may be managed by internal practices.
41. The Defence Force gives greater priority to veterans' issues and providing adequate support infrastructure for Veterans' Affairs.	ACTIONED OR UNDER WAY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NZDF has established an enhanced transition project to develop this.
42. Veterans' Affairs is resourced so that it has the operational capability and capacity to carry out the job it was set up to do.	ACTIONED OR UNDER WAY Some infrastructure investment has been made following Budget 2019.
43. Veterans' Affairs continues to build skills related to veterans' needs, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. investigating inclusion of a question about military service on general practice registration databases b. general practitioner and specialist training c. training for its own staff d. more Māori/cultural support. 	ACTIONED OR UNDER WAY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This recommendation will inform future Veterans' Affairs training plans. An ongoing programme of cultural support is being delivered. Arrangements are being developed to provide information to GPs and medical specialists through training sessions and conferences.
44. Veterans' Affairs and the Defence Force work to establish a register of all veterans, their service, their deployments, environmental and other risks they may have been exposed to, and any service-related conditions.	ACTIONED OR UNDER WAY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A review of all historical deployments post 1974 is in progress.
45. Veterans are identified and offered effective transition support when leaving the Defence Force for civilian life.	ACTIONED OR UNDER WAY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NZDF provides a weekly list to Veterans' Affairs of releasing members who may qualify for support and services. NZDF Health provides a managed handover for members going through a medical release. An NZDF enhanced transition project has been stood up to develop this.

Status of Paterson Review Recommendations: October 2019	
46. Veterans' Affairs improves its outreach communication and public information about veterans' support, for veterans and the community, including the development of: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> information (such as a brochure and/or video) on the appeals process easily accessible information for veterans living, or considering living, overseas. 	ACTIONED OR UNDER WAY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is planned to develop an "appeals" video in 2019-2020. A brochure has been developed with the Department of Veterans' Affairs in Australia for Kiwi veterans in Australia. A "Check your eligibility" tool has been developed and Veterans' Affairs is working on other plain language improvements to its communications with veterans. A Facebook page has been launched.
47. Veterans' Affairs explores the use of modern technologies, including online applications, setting up a "My Account", and using mobile phones and social media to communicate with veterans.	ACTIONED OR UNDER WAY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capital was allocated in Budget 2019 for Veterans' Affairs to upgrade its current platform as a precursor to online services.
48. Veterans' Affairs investigates advocacy models and the infrastructure needed to build a professional, well-trained advocacy workforce.	MEDIUM-TERM IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME This has not yet been agreed; it would require new funding.
49. The 30-working-day limit for decisions is removed from the Act, and Veterans' Affairs is required to make decisions as quickly as reasonably practicable, and to keep veterans informed about progress with decisions.	SHORT-TERM IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME This is included in the 2020 legislative programme.
50. Veterans' Affairs is resourced to complete implementation of its information technology system.	ACTIONED OR UNDER WAY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capital was allocated in Budget 2019 for Veterans' Affairs to upgrade its current platform as a precursor to online services.
51. Veterans' Affairs reviews its policies, processes and practices, to ensure that they align with a generous application of the principles under the Act, consistent with the flexibility and discretion permitted by the Act.	ACTIONED OR UNDER WAY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Veterans' Affairs has established a policy and process review group.
52. Veterans' Affairs reviews its operational policy covering overseas travel.	ACTIONED OR UNDER WAY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A simplified policy is available on the Veterans' Affairs website.
53. Section 59(2), which requires veterans living overseas to pay the costs of assessing their ability to work full-time, is removed from the Veterans' Support Act.	MEDIUM-TERM IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME This has been agreed and is included in a policy development programme.
54. Veterans' Affairs reviews its information-sharing and relationship arrangements with the Defence Force and ACC, progresses information-sharing arrangements with IRD for the purposes of weekly compensation and broader tax issues, and explores ways to share information with health practitioners.	ACTIONED OR UNDER WAY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Veterans' Affairs has signed a formal agreement with IRD. Veterans' Affairs has information sharing arrangements in place with NZDF and ACC. Veterans' Affairs continues to work with DIA to find an efficient way of accessing timely advice about the deaths of veterans and spouses.

Status of Paterson Review Recommendations: October 2019	
55. Veterans' Affairs reaches an agreement with Australia's Department of Veterans' Affairs so New Zealand can adopt each new Statement of Principles in full as soon as it becomes aware that the statement has been introduced or amended in Australia.	MEDIUM-TERM IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Veterans' Affairs representative now attends meetings of the Australian Government Repatriation Medical Authority – this is a precondition for reconsideration of the process.
56. Veterans' Affairs seeks agreement from the Australian Government Repatriation Medical Authority for a nominated medical practitioner to attend its meetings to help ensure New Zealand can keep up to date with, and contribute to, the authority's review and adoption of Statements of Principles	ACTIONED OR UNDER WAY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Veterans' Affairs representative now attends meetings of the Australian Government Repatriation Medical Authority.
57. The Veterans' Medical Research Trust Fund grant process is transferred from the Veterans' Health Advisory Panel to the Health Research Council, subject to agreement with the council and arrangements to ensure members of the relevant subcommittee have expertise in veterans' health and health research.	ACTIONED OR UNDER WAY The Minister has agreed not to progress this recommendation.
58. The functions of the Veterans' Advisory Board and the Veterans' Health Advisory Panel are merged into a single new advisory board.	MEDIUM-TERM IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME This has not been agreed – it is on hold pending further policy work.
59. Hearings of the Veterans' Entitlements Appeal Board are not delayed, appellants can access educational resources and advocacy support, and appeal decisions are well publicised.	ACTIONED OR UNDER WAY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are no current delays. There is no waiting list. Appeal support is part of a work programme.
60. Veterans' Affairs reviews entitlements, supports, and services under the Act to ensure they offer an extra margin of support compared with those provided by ACC or other agencies.	MEDIUM-TERM IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Veterans' Affairs has reviewed its current payment levels. It is noted that many of these payments are received jointly with payment from ACC and MSD (they don't cancel each other out). Further change will require policy development to determine whether Veterans' Affairs payments replace or supplement other social supports.
61. Veterans' Affairs reviews the adequacy of financial support for veterans and their families and that this work consider whether: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> all serving and former serving personnel should be eligible for a veteran's pension in recognition of their service to New Zealand the veteran's pension should be higher than New Zealand Superannuation payments the eligibility age for the veteran's pension should be lower than 65 the impairment threshold for a spouse or partner's eligibility for a veteran's pension should be removed there is enough support for spouses and partners who are under 65 at the time of a veteran's death when they are unable to work because of ill health or disability. 	MEDIUM-TERM IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME This will require further policy work. The results of work programmes in other agencies could be relevant.
62. Veterans' Affairs and the Ministry of Social Development work to improve the application process for the Veteran's Pension so qualifying veterans can make an informed choice about whether to receive New Zealand Superannuation or the Veteran's Pension.	ACTIONED OR UNDER WAY All applicants are being asked if they wish to apply for a Veteran's Pension.

Status of Paterson Review Recommendations: October 2019	
63. The Government undertakes further work on who is a veteran and how New Zealand wants to recognise their service.	ACTIONED OR UNDER WAY The Veterans' Advisory Board has now presented its interim report.
64. A further review of the Act, and its operation, takes place within five years of this report, or if statutory amendments are made in response to this report, the first review takes place within five years of the date when the changes come into effect.	ACTIONED OR UNDER WAY This will be kept under review as specified criteria are met.

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