



04 November 2021

The Honourable Meka Whaitiri
Minister for Veterans
Parliament Buildings
Private Bag 18041
WELLINGTON 6160

RESULTS: GOVERNMENT GRANT JULY 2020 TO JUNE 2021

Reference

A. Veteran Affairs Letter - Conditional Grant: Supporting Veteran Wellbeing 29 July 2020

1. The RNZRSA is a veterans' non-government organisation established in 1916 to promote the welfare of returned soldiers. Over the years while the philosophy has remained, the mission has changed to reflect a more holistic approach of supporting veterans and their families. The RSA interprets all those that have served as being veterans.

Introduction

2. The enclosed report details the activities undertaken by the RNZRSA in delivering support direct to veterans. The grant was made available (As outlined in Reference A) "to improve access to support for the veterans - in particular this grant supports front-line work to develop support for veterans with PTSD and mental injury to help them lead a healthy and productive life". This report doesn't include any activity that was completed under the other major grant provided in the 2020/2021 Financial Year through the Conditional grant provided as part of the Covid 19 Response and Recovery Fund.

General

3. Continued Government support has been critical for the RSA to develop a support network that delivers modern and responsive support services. This network reduces the demand on the public health and social services sectors by covering gaps and navigating existing social service provision. Funding from the grant provides:

- reimbursement for travel costs associated with the thousands of kilometers travelled by the many volunteers (circa 250) that make up the RSA support network.
- Salary costs for RNZRSA staff and contractors.
- Mental health training.
- Veteran clinics.

Achievements

4. The grant has enabled the RSA to continue the transformation of frontline support services. Achievements include:

- Increased interactions with veterans at clinic and training roadshows conducted in Northland, Hawkes Bay, Nelson Marlborough and West Coast of the South Island.
- The development of a nationwide training and outreach programme.
- The continuing improvement of support networks that enabled the RSA to mount an effective Covid-19 response.
- The contracting of Mental Health First Response provider to build the capacity of our support advisor network.

Looking forward

5. It is anticipated that the impact of military service and the continued disruptions caused by Covid-19 will maintain and grow the demand for RNZRSA support services. The factors driving this demand include:

- Increasing local RSA engagement improving veteran support services, including supporting NZDF.
- Increasing numbers of Scheme Two veterans seeking support and requiring advocacy with ACC support for routine service injuries.
- Rising complexity in veteran health issues and the need to engage complimentary treatments for veteran health related issues.
- The need to advocate for individual veterans and changes to veteran policy and legislation.
- Increases in operating costs relating to compliance, training, IT and equipment.
- The need to have paid support staff to deliver appropriate responses to veteran needs due to an increasingly complex environment and greater demands.

Conclusion

6. The RNZRSA will continue to provide ongoing support and seek better outcomes for veterans. The grant has provided surety and enhanced our ability to continue developing veteran services envisaged by our founders.

Yours sincerely



B.J. Clark
NATIONAL PRESIDENT

Annexes

- A. RNZRSA Support Services Engagement FY 2020/21
- B. RNZRSA Support Adviser Activity FY 2020/21
- C. Analysis of Grant Expenditure FY 2020/21

RNZRSA Support Service Engagement FY 2020/21

Number of veterans supported

1. **3,432** people were directly engaged by RSA Support Advisors.

- **1,499** scheme one
- **394** scheme two
- **1,539** dependents, family or stakeholders engaged in support related activities.

The scheme one and scheme two veterans were as designated under the Veteran Support Act 2014 legislation.

2. The breakdown of referrals shows that the majority of recorded referring organisations for support services was local RSA's, which is likely reflective in the amount of scheme one veteran's being engaged.

- **1,239** were referred from the local RSAs
- **64** were directed from VANZ
- **80** from within the NZDF via the Base Hubs in Linton, Burnham or from another internal NZDF sources
- **40** were referred from other government agencies (Health, Corrections, Local Government, etc.)
- **491** were self-referrals to support services either locally or at district level, which likely reflects the growing awareness from the ex and current service community about the RSAs ability to help support them
- **330** were from other sources (family, friends, or other agencies not listed)
- **1,188** had no referring organization due to it being directly attributed to a Support Advisors own enquires or not being recorded.

3. Engagement by Support Services with veterans and their families directly improved their circumstances. The government grant reimburses costs for our volunteers and pays for staff to be employed in veteran support. This enables the RSA to provide a network of volunteers and also expertise in support services to provide assistance to volunteers and overall leadership of the veteran support capability.

An example of how Support Services engagement improves veterans' circumstances is outlined below:

The RSA was contacted from our support advisor in Australia (funded through this grant). A critical and urgent issue had arisen with a veteran who was trying to return to New Zealand from Australia due to Covid 19. The issue was multifaceted, and the veteran required support from an Australian veteran NGO (Soldier On), the RSA, NZ Government departments, private sector support and peer to peer veteran support. This included funding for travelling to NZ, movement of the veterans' personal effects, accommodation, employment, mental health support and support to reconnect with the veterans' young children.

A plan was then implemented to get the veteran to another region in New Zealand where they could gain employment opportunities, maintain support and connect back with family. This was accomplished by involving a contemporary veteran who was a member of the RSA to act as their immediate support.

The ability for the National Office of the RNZRSA to organize the support to the veteran is due in part to the government funding support staff to deal with the issue. The situation was alleviated by a mix of funding including the use of emergency poppy money, stabilising the situation for the veteran and allowing for longer term plans to be put in place”.

4. Linking with other government agencies or specialised NGOs in the Justice system through the development of a Corrections based support programme has been instrumental in helping Veterans to make positive steps towards being a productive member of society this includes:
 - connecting with their families and engaging support for them
 - arranging counselling for the veteran or their family
 - advice on eligibility for Veterans' Affairs entitlements and how to apply
 - connecting them with organisations to help with their current needs (MSD support advice on release, GP visits, referrals to the Salvation Army Bridge Programme, etc.)
 - funding by RSA for material needs (for example glasses), and acting as their advocates with Case Managers and Probation Officers.

Op Prison Assist has seen 24 ex-service personnel engaged across New Zealand as part the ongoing support programme run between the Department of Corrections, VANZ and the RNZRSA Support Services this reporting period.

Veterans engaged by region over the 2020/21 reporting period: Auckland - 3, Waikato - 6, Hawkes Bay - 1, Central - 4, Wellington - 3, Canterbury - 4, Otago/Southland - 3

5. Acting as the lead agency in situations where multiple government and/or NGOs are needed to be engaged to get the best possible health outcome for veterans. While the situations may be viewed not as mental health related a significant number of issues dealt with by our support advisors impact on veterans mental health.

A support advisor acted as the advocate for an elderly veteran in bringing his home to an acceptable standard to live in after his return from medical care. The home they rented from a government agency was not adequate for his recovery he needed after medical treatment. For over a month the Support Advisor engaged with the agency involved, health professionals, social services provider, contractors, tenancy manager and other officials to get the work progressed and finished to make sure it was a fit and proper place for the veteran to live safely and healthy. The veteran was impacted significantly not only by his medical care but from the lack of indifference he was shown by support organisations ,this impacted significantly on the veterans mental health.

6. Acting as advocates in relation to adversarial situations where specialist knowledge is required beyond what the veteran can bring or cope with.

A recent case involved a veteran where their condition required further research to ensure that this was accepted by Veteran Affairs as a condition. Acting as their advocate in the matter they worked with VANZ to ensure an improved outcome for the veteran.

The specialist knowledge needed and the time to research and submit a comprehensive case to work with VA in improving the outcome for the veteran was only possible through the Government grant by supporting a full-time employee.

RNZRSA Support Services Activity FY 2020/21

1. Hours of engagement that Support Advisors volunteers were performing their role is broken down into the following:
 - a. **2702** volunteer hours were in visiting clients or stakeholders, giving advice, taking enquires and functioning as an advocate on behalf of clients. It includes: home visits, hospital /rest home visits and includes all other client related activity e.g. To take the person to attend an appointment MSD, doctor, social worker or any other face to face activity which aligns with the RSA Support Advisor role. It also includes Making enquiries on behalf of the person and advocating on their behalf e.g. talking to Disability Support Link, Red Wolf, and engagement with VANZ, ACC, MSD, etc. All interactions allowed for a continuation of support to the clients in social health interaction, or in linking them to a health provider or support agency to manage or support their individual needs.
 - b. **2171** volunteer hours were for meetings with stakeholder organisations, formal representative of the RSA Support Services at an organised event, or devoted to training delivery of knowledge or understanding.
 - c. Meetings include physical or teleconference/video linked meetings between organisations representatives related to Support Services activities. For example, establishing protocols between the justice representatives and the Support Advisors to better facilitate support for RSA clients in the justice system. These stakeholder interactions impact directly on the delivery of support to ex and current serving people and their families, usually by establishing a working relation or MOU with the agencies involved to better facilitate physical, mental and social health or financial outcomes. They also support raising awareness and funding for veterans or their families' to better assist delivery of RSA support services locally and nationally. This includes destigmatising the needs of those suffering from health issues, raising funds and widening public understanding of issues.
 - d. Training includes presentations to organisations, groups and individuals representing and promoting the skills and activities of the Support Advisor role. This includes the Support Advisor Induction Course for Support Advisors and selected other veteran NGOs (for example Pilgrim Bandits), and attendance at workshops and courses that enhance the knowledge and delivery of welfare support services. The government grant supports direct training in mental health awareness via the Mental Health Frist Responder Course run by Co-liberate due to the need of third party expertise in this area to deliver training to support advisors and partners for better delver support to clients.
 - e. **1490** volunteer hours were devoted to other activities related to Support Services but not quantified in the other criteria, which includes internal organisational representation as a Support Advisor (for example as the support representative at the local RSA AGM) and communication out. Continued internal messaging to local RSAs and stakeholders is essential to the overall professionalisation of support and to ensure that veterans or family

- f. members who approach their local RSAs or other stakeholder organisations for help have their details passed on to the RNZRSA Support Services network for follow up enquires to assist them directly.
- g. Total reported volunteer hours for the delivery of support is **6363** hours (less travel). This is the equivalent of approx. 795 working days (8-hour day).
- h. Total distance travelled for the above activities is **80,843** kms by volunteer Support Advisors across New Zealand. The government grant directly supports the travel of the support advisors around the country to be able to meet ex and current service people and their families, either at their residence or at a place of their choosing, encouraging interaction and thus the delivery of support outcomes.

Case Management and Skills Building

- 2. Case management involves support cases beyond the capabilities of Local Support Advisors. This is specifically advocacy related cases generally with veterans in dispute with Veterans Affairs or ACC, where a review or appeal is required due to disagreement on the determination of circumstances of the veteran's eligibility to financial entitlements or benefits. This requires face to face interviewing, follow up conversations, research in to legislation and medical conditions, specialist interviews and correspondence and then a review meeting or going to an appeal panel. Case management is complex and time consuming.
- 3. The government grant supports this by covering administration of a chief advocate and support advisor admin in pursuing a review or appeal, and supporting the ongoing training and knowledge required to be able to conduct complex case management. It is an identified niche skillset that is part lawyer, researcher and professional advocate in equal parts.
- 4. Total recorded national office ongoing case management for the year is **17**. The stages of case management are broadly broken down into initial investigation, preparing for review, or preparing to appeal. The oldest case dates back to 2017. Time spent on ongoing cases is **1955** hours.
- 5. Training ensures competent support delivery to the veteran community and their families. It is the corner stone of the professionalisation of RNZRSA Support Services and plays a vital role in ensuring that the veteran community receives the best possible service related to delivery of effect on their health and wellbeing.
- 7. As part of the wider engagement and professionalisation of RSA support Co-liberate was engaged to run a pilot Mental Health First Responder course in the 2020/2021 year. **8** students attended the pilot course, which was RSA and Veteran affairs staff with a mix of ages, gender and ethnicity. The course is practical in its approach and modified to the ex-military learning style. It was well received by students, giving practical examples and role play to attendees in managing clients with mental health needs. This is especially prevalent in high needs veterans and families where PTSD and mental health issues affect the overall wellbeing of the family, who are overwhelmingly the primary carers in these cases. This courses allows for Support advisors to assist the primary carers in managing mental health clients, giving

some relief to the suffered as well as the families. This has led to a contract for more courses to be run into the next reporting year as part of the training framework for Support Advisors.

8. RSA Support staff attended, and continue to be invited to attend, the various military wellbeing expos held at various camps and facilities as well as the transition seminars. Both transition seminar presentations in the 2020/2021 year were well received according to the feedback given. The new NZDF transition coaches have been engaged by RNZRSA for future development opportunities. The presence of RSA presenters and attendees allows for engagement with NZDF personnel in a pro-active manner, imparting knowledge of support avenues, or in the case of transition seminars, and understanding of the needs around preparing for a cultural change in working and social environment. This acts as a preventative initiative in terms of support where the individuals can pro-actively seek support or prepare themselves for the changes to occur, rather than struggle and need to be engaged once things have become dire.
9. RNZRSA maintains a presence on both the **Veterans Advisory Board (VAB)** and **Veterans Reference Group (VRG)** to advocate for veteran interests as well as support government understanding and aspirations in the veteran space. These support initiatives for the veteran community to access appropriate support through collaboration with relevant agencies (e.g., NZDF) by ensuring that the veteran voice is heard within these forums by RSA representatives as well as giving an understanding of government agency direction in relation to issues involving current and ex serving personnel and their families. This is imparted throughout the support services network to ensure situational awareness across topics related to health and wellbeing of the veteran community.
10. The RSA Support Services Training frame work is now formalised for all Support Advisor and Manager Pre-requisites. This requires them to understand and sign a code of ethics, Privacy ABC e-learning and to be police vetted, as part of the pre requirements of being part of RNZRSA Support Services. This requirement is ensuring that support advisors or managers are fit and proper persons to be able to interact with vulnerable clients safely and in keeping with the client's rights.
11. A formal induction course has been implemented and is being rolled out in the reporting period and into the next for all RSA support advisors who complete the pre-requisite requirements to increase overall skill levels of RSA support volunteers and for selected stakeholder veteran support organisations. This will give consistency of best practice across the RNZRSA support network where the client and advisor interaction most frequently occur, in keeping with the program of professionalisation of support delivery, as well as bring in uniformed capacity to the wider veteran NGO community for those who engaged in practical support.

Analysis of Grant Expenditure FY 2020/21

Balance: **250,000k**

All figures are GST exclusive

Activity	Remarks	Expenditure
National Office Staff and District Support Manager (DSM) Operating		
National Office Staff Operating	2 x FTE. Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mileage. • Travel • Accommodation. • Meals. Activities include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public / Private Sector Engagement Plans. • NZDF Engagement Plan. • Internal Engagement. • Advocacy. • Volunteer Training and Development. • District planning. 	53,558
Paid DSM Pilot Waikato	Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mileage. • Travel. • Accommodation. • Meals. 	9,950
Contractor - RNZRSA Advocate / Adviser	Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complex case management. • VA and ACC reviews and appeals. • Complaints to health & Disability Commissioner. • Submissions. 	17,000
Contractor - District Support Manager (Australia)	Salary. Mileage, travel, etc. included in DSM operating	30,000
		SUB TOTAL: 118,431
Support Network Operating:		
Expense claims	<u>Includes:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mileage. • Accommodation. • Meals. • Phone cards. • Stationary. • Postage. • Meeting 	73,091
		SUB TOTAL: 73,091
Training & Development:		
Mental Health Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 x Mental Health First Responder Course Pilot • 8 x Mental Health First Responder Courses 	26,788
District Support Road Show	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 x District Road show clinics and training 	31,357
Training Frame Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support Advisor JD Analysis 	1,582
District Support Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation 	225
Support Services Manual of Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter completion 	539
		SUB TOTAL: 60,491
Total expenditure		TOTAL: 252,013