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Changes to the Veterans' Support Act 2014



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RSA support services for our veterans



MESSAGE FROM JACKI

Jacki Couchman, Head of Veterans' Affairs and Secretary for War Pensions

Kia ora tatou

This is our final edition of Veterans' Affairs News for 2015. It's been a good year for the team here at Veterans' Affairs – albeit with a few challenges! The new Act has required us to work in some new ways – but also enabled us to do even more for veterans and their families. We also have some new funding from government to spend directly on services for veterans, which will be very much welcomed.

I've enjoyed being out and about this year meeting a number of you. I've appreciated your warmth, your stories and your candour. We've worked very hard to deliver over the past year and it hasn't all been plain sailing. Thank you for your feedback, your suggestions and your patience. Thank you, also, for the compliments you send when we do things well. We're very proud to serve and support New Zealand veterans and their families and it's wonderful to know that we are making a difference.



We wish you and your loved ones a safe and happy Christmas season. Meri Kirihimete ki a koe me te whanau.

MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

Hon Craig Foss, Minister of Veterans' Affairs

With the holiday season now upon us, I would like to extend my best wishes to all our veterans and their families.

This year has again been an extremely busy one for us all. It's important we now take some time to relax with our loved ones and reflect on the year gone by.

I was privileged to attend the Anzac Day and Battle for Chunuk Bair centenary commemorations at Gallipoli in April and August respectively. The experience is, I find, hard to put into words. There is a feeling of togetherness, sorrow, pride and, above all, absolute respect and acknowledgement.

In September, I visited the graves of New Zealand service personnel buried in Malaysia and Singapore. I paid my respects to each of the Kiwi men buried there, as did a Defence representative – their service has not been forgotten. The graves are well maintained, cared for and respected.

I've had the opportunity throughout the

year to meet many veterans – both young and old – and it's reassuring to hear so often that the support provided under the Veterans' Support Act 2014 (VSA) is welcomed and appreciated.

This December will see the introduction of VSA Scheme Two, which will be available for all veterans who served in qualifying operational service after 1974 (after Viet Nam) and who make a claim after 7 December 2015. I know many of our veterans engage with Veterans' Affairs and I encourage you to continue doing so.

May I wish all our veterans, wherever you may be in the world, a very Merry Christmas. The gift you have given – and continue to give – of hope, freedom and peace, is one we all value beyond measure. I wish you and your loved ones a safe and happy festive season and all the best for 2016.



MESSAGE FROM CDF

Lieutenant General Tim Keating MNZM, Chief of Defence Force

As another year's end approaches, I reflect on all that we have achieved as a Force for New Zealand over the past 12 months. Above the usual pace our busy Defence Force maintains as we recruit and train to continue to protect New Zealand and her interests, we also have seen an increase in operational tempo – something each of you will be familiar with. Every day, current Service people earn the right to add the title 'veteran' to their list of achievements. It is an important title that recognises the sacrifices they and their families have made in service to their country.

Of particular note to each of you, changes to the Veterans' Support Act over the past 12 months have seen enhancements to the ways we can continue to support our veterans. Last December's changes were aimed at our older vets, with this month's changes seeing individually-tailored packages of service and support made available to our younger Veterans. If you need to know more about the

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Thank you for your service in the New Zealand Defence Force. Your contribution on behalf of our nation is greatly appreciated and will never be forgotten.

MORE SUPPORT AND MORE SERVICES FOR MORE VETERANS

Last year a new Act called the Veterans' Support Act 2014 came into effect, giving Veterans' Affairs the ability to introduce new types of entitlements and support for veterans and their families.

Scheme One of the Act was introduced in December 2014 and covers veterans from the Second World War to the Viet Nam War.

Scheme Two will be introduced on 7 December this year and it covers all other veterans with qualifying operational service from 1 April 1974 onwards.

We are also introducing the Veterans' Independence Programme (VIP). The VIP is available to all veterans who need it and is designed to help veterans continue living independently in their own home.

Scheme Two and the VIP together help provide more support and more services for more veterans than ever before in New Zealand.

SCHEME TWO

Scheme Two recognises the needs of younger veterans, whether civilian or currently serving.

It has a focus on tailored wrap-around packages of treatment and rehabilitation, including vocational support.

Where a veteran is unable to work because of a service-related injury or illness, or where a veteran has died because of a service-related illness or injury, we can offer vocational services to their spouse or partner to support them through this difficult time.

Under Scheme Two veterans will receive support over and above that offered by ACC. See page 4 for more info on top-ups.

VETERANS' INDEPENDENCE PROGRAMME

The VIP is available to any veteran with qualifying service who needs it.

The VIP is designed to help veterans live independently in their own home. After a needs assessment, tailored packages of support are provided to veterans; these include things like home

help, house and section maintenance and travel costs.

WHAT IS STAYING THE SAME?

With all that is changing it is important to mention what remains the same.

Be assured that Veterans' Affairs will maintain the same benevolent approach in recognition of service and when determining claims based on merit.

Pension entitlements under the old War Pensions Act 1954 are "grand parented", and even where a new pension is applied for payments won't reduce.

Veterans will continue to have access to treatment for their service-related health conditions.

Travel concessions remain the same – but it will be easier for veterans to claim up to \$200 recreational travel per year.

We will continue to update you on these improvements and changes to our support and services through future issues of Veterans' Affairs News and through our website. If you can't find the information you need there please contact us directly or talk to your case manager.

UPDATE ON SERVICE DELIVERY FOR VETERANS' AFFAIRS – THE VETERANS' INDEPENDENCE PROGRAMME (VIP)

As some of you will know, the new Veteran's Independence Programme (VIP) comes into being on 7 December 2015. The purpose of the VIP is to provide services and support to veterans who are unable to undertake activities necessary for them to live independently in their home. These services might include such things as short-term attendant care, home help, house and section maintenance, home adaptations (for ramps and rails), allowances and adaptive clothing and footwear, and medical alarms.

For the most part, the VIP takes support that Veterans' Affairs already provides and puts it together into a needs-based package for veterans. There are some important changes, however.

The first change is that the VIP is available, based on need, to all veterans with qualifying service whether or not they have a service-related injury or illness. This means that all veterans who need support to maintain their

independence in their home can seek support under the VIP from Veterans' Affairs. This will enable us to support veterans with longer-term support needs and also those who might need a shorter period of support (perhaps before, during and after surgery, for example).

The second change is the VIP support we will be able to provide for spouses and partners. In the past Veterans' Affairs has been able to provide home-based support to spouses and partners for six months following the passing of a veteran. This period will now be extended to 12 months. We hope these new provisions will be of assistance to spouses and partners during a very difficult time.

The last, but not least change is the funding we have available for the VIP. There is additional government funding of over \$5 million per year to provide VIP support, in recognition of the broader group of veterans we will be able to assist. This means we will be able to

provide more services for more veterans.

If you, or another veteran you know, might qualify for support under the VIP, please contact Veterans' Affairs on Freephone 0800 483 8372 – or talk to your case manager if you have one already.

UPDATE ON SERVICE DELIVERY FOR VETERANS' AFFAIRS – WHO WE CONTRACT WITH TO PROVIDE SERVICES FOR VETERANS

It's important that the services provided to veterans and their families are of good quality, consistent, and provided by qualified and vetted individuals. Veterans' Affairs needs to meet government procurement requirements and to administer services for veterans efficiently. The Veterans' Support Act also includes some new requirements around service delivery. As an example, treatment can now only be delivered by qualified health practitioners, to ensure that treatment is safe and appropriate.

Ever wondered where your Poppy donation goes?

Each year, New Zealanders generously support the Returned and Services Association's annual Poppy Appeal. This year we received a record breaking \$2.5 million dollars in donations from our collectors on the street, text and online donations and a variety of fundraising initiatives from our commercial partner and supporters. So what does the RSA do with this money?

100% of the funds collected through the Poppy Appeal reside in our Poppy Trust, which RSAs all over New Zealand access to deliver support services in their area to all current and former service personnel and their families, including the New Zealand Police. And you don't have to be a member of the RSA to qualify for assistance.

The RSA's support services are delivered to everyone from WWII veterans and those who have served in more recent conflicts to younger, contemporary service people and the families of those currently serving overseas. The RNZRSA wants as many people as possible to know that our support services are available, and more importantly, to access them. These support services include:

- An RSA Discount Club Card to access discounts at a wide range of retail stores.
- Access to other sources of RSA financial assistance if the condition is not related to qualifying service for the purposes of the Veterans' Support Act 2014.
- 'Family Days' or 'time out' activities for the families of deployed personnel during their absence.
- Supportive discussions with other RSA members who have experienced similar issues.
- Advocacy and representation while seeking support.
- Assistance with accessing support through Veterans' Affairs.



We encourage anyone who knows someone who needs support or is looking for help themselves, to ring their local RSA and ask to speak to a Support Advisor. Our services are completely confidential and free of charge.

To locate your local RSA visit www.rsa.org.nz

Veterans' Affairs has sought providers for the following services:

- **Lawns and Gardens.**
The new contract is currently being implemented by Crewcut NZ. We have over 1100 veterans in receipt of these services. This is a large and complex set of service arrangements, so please bear with us if we are currently working through services for you.
- **Home Help.**
The new provider will be Health Care New Zealand Limited from 1 February 2016. We are currently working with Health Care New Zealand Limited to transition as smoothly as possible to new arrangements. Wherever it is possible to do so we will maintain current home help providers.
- **Prescription Services.**
The new provider will be Green Cross Health from 1 February 2016. This new contract means that you will be able to pick up prescriptions for your accepted conditions at no charge. Your prescription charges will be billed straight to Veterans' Affairs. You'll still be able to go to your usual pharmacy.
- **Memorials.**
The new provider from 1 November is Peninsula Memorials. They are now looking after production of plaques and headstones as well as installation.
- **Podiatry.**
Currently being implemented by Foot Mechanics from 1 November.

We are working hard with our new providers to ensure that transition to new arrangements is as efficient as possible. Thank you for your patience.

VETERANS' ADVISORY BOARD

The Veterans' Advisory Board (VAB) was established in accordance with the Veterans' Support Act 2014, to provide independent advice to the Minister of Veterans' Affairs on matters relating to veterans and their families. The appointments to the board were confirmed in April 2015. Since then the board has met three times; 15 June, 27 August and 26 November.

The main focus of the board has been monitoring the application of Scheme 1 of the Veterans' Support Act, which was introduced in December 2014. The board has also provided feedback on the draft regulations for Scheme 2 which together with the Veterans' Independence Programme (VIP) comes into being on 7 December 2015. A future programme of work is being developed which will include participating in the formal review of the Veterans' Support Act, commencing in December of next year.

TOP UPS TO ACC ENTITLEMENTS

Scheme Two of the Veterans' Support Act 2014, which commences on 7 December 2015, covers veterans with qualifying operational service since 1974 (excluding Viet Nam veterans). Deployments covered by the new scheme include Bosnia, East Timor, Afghanistan and Iraq.

The entitlements in Scheme Two are similar to the entitlements available for some veterans through ACC. However, Veterans' Affairs will be able to offer eligible veterans and their families additional support to recognise the special service that veterans have provided to New Zealand. Where a veteran receives support from ACC such as weekly compensation and impairment compensation, our Act allows us to provide additional entitlements and support on top of the veteran's ACC entitlements.

For example, weekly compensation is paid at 100% of the veteran's earnings for the first year. Where incapacity continues after the first year, we will pay weekly compensation of 85% of earnings – higher than the 80% paid by ACC. The rates of Independence Allowance and lump sum payments we can pay to veterans for impairment compensation are also higher than the ACC rates. Veterans' Affairs may also be able

to provide additional treatment and rehabilitation on top of the services being provided by ACC.

What does this mean for veterans?

Veterans who have qualifying operational service will continue to be entitled to support and services under the Veterans' Support Act.

Where a veteran has entitlements under both the ACC Act and the Veterans' Support Act, Veterans' Affairs will work with ACC to make sure that veteran gets all the support and services they are entitled to, to the extent they would be entitled under our Act.

How will ACC and Veterans' Affairs work together?

Some data will be shared between ourselves and ACC. In order for us to ensure veterans are receiving what they are entitled to, we will need to know if a veteran is receiving ACC entitlements, and what services and support are already being provided by ACC. This

information will be able to be supplied to us by ACC, with a veteran's consent.

We will only seek information from ACC for those veterans who are in receipt of entitlements that require ACC assistance to be taken into consideration.

To reduce the likelihood of veterans requiring further assessment when applying for assistance from Veterans' Affairs, Veterans' Affairs will also be able to use information that ACC has obtained for the veterans they provide support to, such as medical reports for accepted conditions.

How is my privacy protected?

Veterans' Affairs takes the privacy of veterans seriously and handles all personal information in accordance with the requirements of the Privacy Act 1993 and the Health Information Privacy Code 1994. Veterans' Affairs only collects personal information related to a veteran's claim, entitlements and/or support services provided by Veterans' Affairs.

VIET NAM VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES TRUST

The Viet Nam Veterans and their Families Trust (Trust) provides one-off grants to Viet Nam Veterans and their families (who live in New Zealand or overseas) to assist with relief from poverty and/or hardship.

The current trustees are:

Philippa Smith Lambert (Chair) – appointed by the Ministers of Veterans' Affairs and Defence

Robert (Bukit) Hill – appointed by the RNZRSA

Michael Dudman – appointed by the RNZRSA

Pamela Miley-Terry – appointed by the NZVVA (Viet Nam Veterans' Association)

Graham Gibson – appointed by the NZVVA

Decisions of the Trustees are made independently of any Government body.

Applications are accepted all year round and are considered by the Trustees at the next scheduled quarterly meeting following receipt. The Trustees consider all applications they receive and in deciding whether or not to make a grant

the Trustees look to see the benefit a grant would make to someone's life. The Trust distributes about \$250,000 a year and the average amount per grant is just over \$3,500, but larger and smaller grants are also made depending on the individual's circumstances.

If a Viet Nam veteran or family member you know is struggling please encourage them to apply if you think there is a need.

Check www.communitymatters.govt.nz to find out more about the Trust and the types of things the Trust does and doesn't fund or to download an application form.

Message from CDF ... continued from page 1

changes and how they affect each of you, I encourage you to contact your Case Manager or take a look at the information on the Veterans' Affairs website.

Looking forward, 2016 will see some of our modern veterans heading over to Florida to take part in the second Invictus Games - an international sporting competition that unites wounded, ill, and injured Service men and women from 15 countries. The Invictus Games fosters camaraderie and brings together a community among the military athletes

and their families, and I am delighted that 20 of our currently serving and veteran community will participate.

There is much to reflect on from the past 12 months, and much to look forward to over the coming year. I remain grateful and honoured to lead an organisation that completes such important work. To each of you, and to your families, I wish a peaceful Christmas, and a very happy New Year.

LTGEN Tim Keating, MNZM
Chief of Defence Force



Articles for Veterans' Affairs News are to be posted to:

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Thank you for your service in the New Zealand Defence Force. Your contribution on behalf of our nation is greatly appreciated and will never be forgotten.

