

VANZ News

April 2012



INSIDE

War pension and veteran's pension rates to increase

70th anniversary of US marines in NZ

Fall of Singapore commemorated

NZ delegation to attend Bomber Command memorial

Keeping in touch with Veterans' Affairs New Zealand

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VANZ NEWS
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The Minister with Mr Hugh Nelson following the Fall of Singapore commemoration in Wellington.

A message from the Minister

Hon Nathan Guy, Minister of Veterans' Affairs

I have been the Minister for Veterans' Affairs since December 2011 and it is a great honour. I was very proud to be asked by the Prime Minister to take on this important portfolio.

As the local MP for Otaki I have attended many commemorations over the years and I have a real respect for what servicemen and women have done for our country.

This is a special portfolio for two reasons.

Firstly, it is an important sign of the respect that the Government – and New Zealand as a whole – has for veterans and their role as defenders of peace, freedom and our way of life.

Over the next couple of years we commemorate many significant anniversaries from the First and Second World Wars, and the Korean War.

I am proud that we are supporting eligible veterans to attend anniversary commemorations. This will include the official New Zealand delegation of RNZAF veterans who served with Bomber Command, who will attend the dedication and unveiling of their memorial in London in June this year.

We will also be sending an official delegation to mark the 70th anniversary of the Battle of El Alamein, and there will be local events to mark the 70th anniversary of the deployment of US marines to New Zealand.

Planning also continues on events to mark the First World War Centenary, including the 100th anniversary of the Gallipoli Landings in 2015 and the 60th anniversary of the end of the Korean War in 2013.

It's also important that we celebrate the service and commemorate the sacrifice of so many New Zealanders. We need to pass this on to future generations so they can understand and appreciate what those before them have contributed to our nationhood.

continued on page 2

From the CHIEF OF DEFENCE FORCE

Lieutenant General RR Jones,
Chief of Defence Force

Kia ora tatou

Over the next few years New Zealanders will commemorate a range of anniversaries from the First and Second World Wars, as well as the Korean and Vietnam Wars.

The NZDF, together with VANZ, is working to ensure we appropriately acknowledge and commemorate these anniversaries and recognise the service of all our veterans.

We also want to pass the stories and memories onto a new generation of New Zealanders to ensure a better understanding of our military history.

One initiative we are working on with Massey University and the Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association, is an authoritative Centenary history of New Zealand and the First World War. This is expected to be completed over the next few years.

Within the Defence Force we will also honour our past. The values you as veterans demonstrated - of courage, comradeship, commitment, and integrity - remain the cornerstones of the New Zealand Defence Force today.

Anzac Day is truly a national day for New Zealand. Many people and families actively mark the day by attending their local service to commemorate and remember those who served, those who died, and those who serve today.

Over 300 Defence Force personnel are currently deployed around the world in countries such as Timor Leste, the Sinai, Afghanistan and the Pacific – often working alongside other Defence Forces.

The work of this new generation of sailors, soldiers and airmen and airwomen help to maintain peace and stability around the world today.

A message from the Minister

continued from page 1

Secondly, as well as these important commemorations, Veterans' Affairs also provides much-needed direct services and support.

Good progress has been made on improving the delivery of services - especially turnaround times on War Disablement Pensions - and to ensure you know what assistance is available to you.

Case managers from Veteran's Affairs can meet with veterans to discuss their issues and concerns. This means they can get to know you and understand your needs.

Of course, veterans of the Second World War and other conflicts from that era will have different needs to those who have served on more recent deployments. One of my priorities as Minister is to make sure we support these different groups.

I am always interested in hearing your views, and I look forward to meeting as many veterans as possible over the next few years.

WAR PENSION AND VETERAN'S PENSION RATES TO INCREASE

To ensure veterans are not disadvantaged by the rising cost of living, the rate of War Disablement Pension and Veteran's Pension payments are increased annually.

From 1 April 2012, War Disablement Pension and Veteran's Pension payment rates will increase by 1.77 percent, reflecting increases to the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

For example, if you are a veteran aged 65 years or over, and receive a 100 percent War Disablement Pension, you

will now receive a tax-free payment of \$202.57 per week, up from \$199.05 per week.

A Surviving Spouse's Pension will increase from \$146.83 to \$149.43 per week, and a couple on a Veteran's Pension will now receive \$536.80 per week, after tax.

Full details of the changes are on the VANZ website at www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz

Claims for private vehicle travel under the Travel Concession

The process to submit Travel Concession claims has been simplified following feedback from veterans.

In summary the key changes are:

- If you are undertaking a long one-way or return journey over a number of days you do not need to claim for each days travel as a separate journey.
- If you claim for a journey based on travel between your starting location and your furthest destination, you will be paid based on the most direct route between the two localities, subject to verification by VANZ.
- If your journey consists of travel to a number of different destinations, you may claim each individual leg of your journey that is 80km or more as a separate journey.
- When purchasing fuel, it is important

to note that if you cannot purchase fuel from either your starting location or destination, you will need to obtain a receipt from a fuel supplier at the closest place to that location, based on the route you travelled, plus you will need to provide evidence that substantiates your visit to your final destination.

- If you begin or end a journey at a place where fuel is available, you must buy fuel from that location.

An updated Information Sheet and Application Form reflecting all of the changes will be sent out with each new claim received. Copies can also be obtained from the VANZ website (www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz) or by calling the VANZ Enquiry Line or your Case Manager on Freephone 0800 483 8372.

70th anniversary of US Marines in NZ

A contingent of United States Marines including a 50-piece band will be in New Zealand in June and July to mark the 70th anniversary of their arrival in New Zealand.

It is also anticipated that some US veterans will be attending the commemorative activities.

The Prime Minister Hon John Key extended the invitation to the United States last year as a way of saying 'thank you' for their support during the Second World War.

Events are still being finalised but they are likely to include a wreath-laying service at the National War Memorial in mid June. The Marine band will also play in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch.

The Kapiti US Marines Trust is also organising a series of events called Salute 70, to bring together both Kiwis and Americans with connections to this important period in our history.



US Marines take a breather during a route march in Wellington.

Photo: courtesy of Alexander Turnbull Library.



A parade led by the US Marines for Poppy Day in Wellington, 16 April 1943.

Photo: courtesy of Alexander Turnbull Library.



Fall of Singapore commemorated

The late Bill Mitchell from Oamaru and Ted West from the North Shore, both in their nineties, travelled to Singapore in February to attend a special ceremony to mark the 70th anniversary of the Fall of Singapore.

Both men served with the RNZAF in Singapore during the Second World War, and were honoured to lay wreaths at ceremonies at the Kranji War Cemetery and the Changi Museum and Prison.

The ceremony at the Kranji War Cemetery was also attended by Chief of Air Force Air Vice-Marshal Peter Stockwell, and the New Zealand Defence Adviser in Singapore, Group Captain Tim Walshe.

The ceremonies were a highly emotional time for both men as they recounted stories

from their service in Singapore, and had the privilege of paying tribute to those servicemen and personal friends who did not return to New Zealand.

Sadly, in March, Bill Mitchell passed away in Oamaru, having had the opportunity to return to Singapore and to be able to commemorate his service and perhaps reflect on his life all those years ago.

A wreath laying ceremony was also held at the National War Memorial in Wellington to mark the 70th anniversary in New Zealand. The ceremony was attended by Clem Randall of Nelson, and Hugh Nelson of Paraparaumu, who both served with the RNZAF's 488 Squadron as ground crew in Singapore just before the city fell to the Japanese on 15 February 1942. Also in



Mr Ted West and the late Mr Bill Mitchell in Singapore.



attendance were the Minister of Veterans' Affairs Hon Nathan Guy, Singapore High Commissioner, Mr Justice (ret'd) MPH Rubin and Vice Chief of Defence Force Rear Admiral Jack Steer.

The two veterans said they were proud to be able to attend the ceremony and pay tribute to those who did not return.

During the conflict 35 New Zealand airmen lost their lives, along with 40 naval officers who died in operations either in Malayan waters or in Hong Kong, which had fallen to the Japanese on Christmas Day 1941. About 100 New Zealand servicemen and several hundred civilians become prisoners of war in the Pacific.

NZ delegation to attend dedication of BOMBER COMMAND MEMORIAL

On 28 June this year a Memorial will be unveiled and dedicated in London's Green Park, to commemorate the 55,593 Bomber Command airmen who were killed during the Second World War, including 1851 New Zealanders.

Around 6000 RNZAF servicemen served with Bomber Command, led by the Royal Air Force during the Second World War.

Veterans' Affairs New Zealand General Manager, Rick Ottaway says, "We are

sending an official delegation of RNZAF veterans who served with Bomber Command to attend the commemoration. It is also a time to remember those veterans who did not return home".

Their travel will be by an Air Force Boeing 757, and accommodation, transport, travel and medical costs will be funded by Veterans' Affairs. Those eligible to travel also need to meet medical and fitness criteria to ensure they are well enough to travel and participate

in the commemorative events. It is anticipated that New Zealand based commemorations, to coincide with activities in London, will take place in Wellington or Auckland.

For more information please contact VANZ freephone on

0800 483 8372

or by email:

veterans@xtra.co.nz

Staff profile: Leah Macdonald – Manager, Veteran Services



In this issue we meet Leah Macdonald whose job is to ensure veterans receive the best service possible through good case management. Leah has worked in management roles within VANZ for several years.

Leah says a key issue facing Veterans' Affairs is the changing veteran population. Together with her Team Leaders, Pat Povey and Marita Teeuwen, she is focused on ensuring the Case Management Team are knowledgeable and give veterans the right support and information.

"In the past our biggest group of veterans were those who served in the Second World War. But newer veterans are more technologically savvy and have different needs and expectations. We need to

be responsive to this group while continuing to support our older veterans," says Leah.

Based on the feedback they receive, Leah is very confident case managers are up to the task and the changes ahead of them.

A highlight for Leah was the difference the Veteran Services team made by supporting veterans following the Christchurch earthquake in February last year. Case Managers contacted their active veterans, and others where possible, to ensure they were okay. Many of the veterans said it was good to know that VANZ was thinking of them.

When not at work, Leah has enjoyed a long involvement with hockey, playing at the club and provincial level, and representing New Zealand at the Masters level for 10 years. Today she is still actively involved through her son and partner who are heavily involved at all levels. For rest and relaxation, Leah and her family enjoy fishing and she works hard to maintain her record of catching the biggest fish on their boat.

Expressions of Interest - 70th Anniversary of Battle of El Alamein

In a previous issue of VANZ News, New Zealand veterans looking to attend 70th anniversary commemorations of the Battle of El Alamein were invited to contact Veterans' Affairs New Zealand, to express their interest. This commemoration will be representative of the North Africa campaign (1941-1943).

Veterans' Affairs New Zealand is still seeking Expressions of Interest from New Zealand veterans of the North Africa campaign, who may wish to attend the commemorations in 2012, either in New Zealand or overseas. It is expected that there will be much interest around the 70th anniversary of the Battle of El Alamein in October 2012, a battle that was a turning point in the Second World War and one in which New Zealand troops played a critical role.

If you have not already registered your interest in attending the 70th anniversary of the Battle of El Alamein commemorations in 2012, and would like to do so, please contact:

Aaron Hanley, Adviser Commemorations, Veterans' Affairs New Zealand, PO Box 5146, WELLINGTON 6145

Freephone: 0800 483 8372, Email: veterans@xtra.co.nz

Keeping in touch with Veterans' Affairs New Zealand

Please tell us as soon as you

- change your address
- change your bank account
- change your marital status
- plan to go overseas to live
- move to a rest home or hospital
- have someone come to live with you

In the sad event of your death

- your family or the executor of your estate needs to tell us as soon as you pass away
- your partner or family may have some entitlements, ie
 - a funeral grant
 - a memorial plaque or headstone for your grave in a public or private cemetery
 - you may be receiving help that needs to be cancelled or reassessed
- your pension will be paid until the date of your death; if it is not stopped immediately after your death it can quickly build up a debt that your estate will have to repay

We suggest you leave this note with your Will or personal papers so the person looking after your affairs knows to get in touch with us.

Veterans' Affairs New Zealand
ph 0800 483 8372 in NZ
ph +64 4 495 2070 from overseas
email veterans@xtra.co.nz

Upcoming commemorative events

APRIL 2012

- 24 April
 - 61st anniversary Battle of Kap'yong
- 25 April
 - Anzac Day Services, Gallipoli, Turkey

MAY 2012

- 8 May
 - 67th anniversary Victory in Europe (VE) Day
- 20 May
 - 71st anniversary Battle for Crete

JUNE 2012

- 6 June
 - 68th anniversary of D Day
- 7 June
 - 95th anniversary Battle of Messines
- 25 June
 - 62nd anniversary start of the Korean War



VANZ News is distributed quarterly to veterans and interested parties. Your comments and feedback are welcomed – email veterans@xtra.co.nz or freephone 0800 483 8372 (in NZ) or 64 4 495 2070 (from overseas).