

## Vietnam veterans recognised

**4** Vietnam Veterans Health Expo a success



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## About VA News





VA News is published four times a year by Veterans' Affairs New Zealand—Te Tira Ahu Ika a Whiro.

Our team takes care in writing great content and—to the best of our knowledge—has sourced accurate information.

The views expressed in VA News are not necessarily those of Veterans' Affairs or the New Zealand Defence Force.

## Contact us

For more information about Veterans' Affairs or anything in this edition of VA News:

-  [www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz](http://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz)
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**+64 4 495 2070**  
(rest of world)
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Please note our Hamilton PO Box is now closed.

Cover image: Governor-General, Her Excellency the Rt Hon Dame Patsy Reddy, at a Mentioned in Despatches ceremony in Auckland.



New Zealand Government

# From the Head of Veterans' Affairs

## Tēnā koutou katoa

All of us at Veterans' Affairs were devastated by the unprecedented Christchurch terror attack that occurred on Friday 15 March. We have all felt raw emotions of grief and love for the victims and our fellow New Zealanders.

If you need to talk to someone, I encourage you to call or text 1737 to speak with a trained counsellor. This service is free of charge, and available day and night to callers within New Zealand.

This edition of VA News focuses on working better, together—with respect and kindness for all.

A good example of working together is the recently formed Combined Veteran Advocacy Group (CVAG), which aims to ensure ongoing communication and collaborations between all the member groups, to continually support our veteran community. Members of CVAG are the New Zealand Defence Force and Veterans' Affairs, the Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association, the No Duff Charitable Trust and the Australasian Services Care Network.



Bernadine Mackenzie,  
Head of Veterans' Affairs

I know many of you will shortly be preparing to attend Anzac Day services here in New Zealand, and around the world. It's a time for us to remember and acknowledge all those who have served and continue to serve today – and the sacrifices made by so many in the shaping of our lives and of our history.

**Ka maumahara tonu tātou ki a rātou.  
We will remember them.**



Representatives at the signing of the Combined Veteran Advocacy Group charter. From left to right: Jack Steer ONZM, Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association; Steve Shamy, Australasian Services Care Network; Aaron Wood, No Duff Charitable Trust; Bernadine Mackenzie, Veterans' Affairs; and Bernie Grant, representing the Chief of Defence Force.



# Introducing Sharon Cavanagh, your new Manager Veterans' Services



Sharon Cavanagh,  
Manager Veterans' Services

## VA News sat down with Sharon Cavanagh, our new Manager Veterans' Services, at the end of her first month at Veterans' Affairs.

**VA News:** *Kia ora Sharon, welcome to Veterans' Affairs. How's your first month been?*

**Sharon:** Kia ora, and thanks! It's been busy and full-on, but equally fantastic—I've really hit the ground running. My first two weeks involved an induction and hand over from Pat Povey, the outgoing Manager Veterans' Services. I also headed up to Warkworth in my first week with our team for a VA Forum at the local RSA. Getting the chance to talk to our veterans face-to-face was not only an enjoyable experience, but also was productive and gave me a few ideas to take back to the office.

**VA News:** *You really have hit the ground running! I'm sure our readers would love to know a little bit more about you. Would you be happy to share?*

**Sharon:** Of course. I was born and grew up in Whanganui, however whakapapa to Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Porou and Ngāti Kahungunu. I've also lived in Rotorua and Tauranga, and here in Wellington for the last twelve years. I've worked in a range of organisations, both public service and NGO sectors, including leadership positions with Ministry of Social Development, ACC, Inland Revenue, IHC, Arthritis New Zealand, the Asthma Foundation, and a Primary Health Organisation. Most recently I worked for FinCap—a new NGO established in 2017 that supports more than 200 financial capability and budgeting services throughout the country. There I developed a Quality Assurance framework and supported the establishment of the

new organisation. My passion has always been to do meaningful work that genuinely makes a difference in the lives of New Zealanders. I think my entire career to date has led me to this role and Veterans' Affairs.

**VA News:** *And what about outside of work?*

**Sharon:** I love to cook, and really enjoy a jaunt around op shops and markets. I'm involved with a few community organisations, passionate about supporting community groups, and also culture and arts. I'm a member of the Māori Advisory committee for the Stroke Foundation of New Zealand, and a trustee for both the Second Chance Group—which raises money for second chance education awards—and my whānau trust. I'm also a volunteer with WOW (World of Wearable Arts). Other than that, spending time with whānau.

**VA News:** *Any final thoughts?*

**Sharon:** I'm excited to be part of an organisation that has such a strong focus on the people it serves—our veterans, and their whānau and family. It's a fantastic kaupapa, or reason for being, that everyone here understands. This year is going to see us introduce new ways to better support those we are already helping, but also being a lot more proactive in engaging with younger veterans who may not yet have connected with us.

Also—and I hope this goes without saying—I want to remind everyone that we're here, and only a phone call or email away. Please do not hesitate to get in touch with us if there's something we can do to help.



Changing of the guard. Pat and Sharon at a recent VA Forum in Warkworth



# Vietnam veterans' health the focus at Christchurch expo

**More than 90 Vietnam veterans have attended a health expo in Christchurch organised for them by Veterans' Affairs New Zealand.**

Working in partnership with Rannerdale Veterans' Trust, Veterans' Affairs brought together providers and support organisations so that Vietnam War veterans in the area could find information about support and services available to them.

The veterans were able to meet Veterans' Affairs case managers and local service providers, and were offered seminars and brief assessments to support independent daily living.

Head of Veterans' Affairs Bernadine Mackenzie said bringing together Veterans' Affairs and affiliated organisations was a great way

for local Vietnam veterans to get information face to face.

"We know there's real value in sitting down with our veterans and talking to them about what they need," Ms Mackenzie said.

"With our staff and local service providers at this sort of event veterans can get their questions answered on the spot, and can often get immediate access to specialist providers.

"It helps us to make sure that they are getting the support they need for independent daily living."

Veteran Bruce Young said the expo worked very well.

"When I was told I needed to see someone, they were already there," Mr Young said.

Donna Moore, from Aspire Canterbury, which has been providing support to Christchurch's disabled community for more than 30 years, said it was a privilege to be part of the expo.

**"Given the success in Christchurch we'll be taking this format to other centres, with Auckland next."**

– Bernadine Mackenzie,  
Head of Veterans' Affairs







## Upcoming events and milestones

### APR 12 Poppy Day

Throughout NZ



To find out more:

-  talk to your local RSA
-  [www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/PoppyDay](http://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/PoppyDay)

### APR 25 Anzac Day

Throughout NZ

For information on what's happening in New Zealand:

-  talk to your local RSA
-  [www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/AnzacDay](http://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/AnzacDay)


If you're planning on going to Gallipoli, you need to register for an attendance pass. Find out more at [www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/AnzacDay](http://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/AnzacDay)

### JUN 28 Centenary of the signing of the Treaty of Versailles

## List your event

Are you holding an event for the veteran community?

Let us know:

-  [veterans@nzdf.mil.nz](mailto:veterans@nzdf.mil.nz)



"We've been able to reach and help a wider range of people, who we will now be able to continue to support in their own communities."

Ms Mackenzie said the focus on Vietnam veterans was part of the commitment of Veterans' Affairs, and the Government, to support the group.

"We came to Christchurch because a number of Vietnam veterans live in the area, and we wanted to reach as many people as we could while we were here," she said.

"Given the success in Christchurch we'll be taking this format to other centres, with Auckland next."

Steve Shamy, from Rannerdale Veterans' Trust, applauded the event.

"This is the power of collaboration," he said. "We've all come together, led by Veterans' Affairs, with the common theme of supporting veterans to support themselves.

"We can see them reconnecting with old mates, and talking to their local support organisations together.

"We wouldn't have had such a great turnout without having a local veteran on the ground, working with us to encourage veterans to participate."

That veteran was Ross Milne.

"As a Vietnam veteran myself I understand their background," Mr Milne said. "I want to make sure they have access to the support they need, not only from Veterans' Affairs and the providers but also from each other."

Ms Mackenzie said the focus was on supporting the veterans in the way that best suited them.

"Veterans had told us that they wanted to be able to access information about services and support within their own community, and where possible, face-to-face.

"This weekend's expo was a direct result of that feedback."

**Pictured, opposite: Veterans and support organisations at the expo. Above: Donna Moore from Aspire Canterbury talking to another support provider.**

## Are you commemorating the Battles of Cassino?

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the Battles of Cassino.

Veterans' Affairs, in partnership with Defence Public Affairs, would like to talk to veterans of the battles, and to share their stories.

To register your interest:

@ veterans@nzdf.mil.nz

0800 483 8372 (Freephone New Zealand)  
1800 483 837 (Freephone Australia)  
+64 4 495 2070 (rest of world)

## Help shape future relay services

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment with the Office for Disability Issues want to know what you think about proposed changes to modernise relay services.

Relay services help hearing-impaired and speech-impaired New Zealanders to communicate over the phone. Services include mobile text relay, internet relay, CapTel (captioned telephones), and services using teletypewriters.

For more information and how to have your say, please visit: [www.mbie.govt.nz/relayconsultation](http://www.mbie.govt.nz/relayconsultation)

## New newsletter for Malaya veterans

The New Zealand Malaya Veterans Association has started a new email newsletter.

To join the mailing list contact [nzmalayvets@gmail.com](mailto:nzmalayvets@gmail.com)



### NEED TO TALK?



The 4-digit number is free to call or text, and will connect you to a trained counsellor. It's available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

# Pride25

Honour | Celebrate | Inspire  
Hōnora | Āhuareka | Whakaohoho

This year the New Zealand Defence Force will mark 25 years of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) personnel serving openly in our military.

A number of activities are planned to recognise this milestone. To stay up to date:

@ overwatch@nzdf.mil.nz

f Facebook.com/NZDFOverwatch

## Calling all Mururoa veterans

Mururoa Nuclear Veterans Group is calling for all personnel who served on HMNZS Otago and HMNZS Canterbury on the Mururoa deployment in 1973 to get in touch.

They're able to help out with medical issues and provide welfare support, for both you and your family.

To contact the group:

@ welfare@mururoaveterans73.nz

www.mururoaveterans73.nz



WeServed.nz is the service directory for NZ veterans and service personnel.



www.WeServed.nz



# Invictus Games – Have you got what it takes?

**Applications are open for the 2020 Invictus Games in The Hague, the Netherlands, and NZDF team managers Dave “Pirate” Pilgrim and Warrant Officer Gareth Farmer can’t wait to do it all again.**

The Sydney 2018 Games were Gareth’s first, while Pirate has been manager for Orlando, Toronto and Sydney.

They say it’s not just the competitors who change, it’s everyone around them.

“Your first one, it changes you. You become more humble. Your way of approaching people and talking to people with disabilities changes. It changes your perception,” Gareth said.

Pirate said it was incredible to see the change in competitors, and to know you had been part of that change.

“It’s giving people the opportunity to get better, to improve their wellbeing, listening to them, and not ignoring them. Treating them with respect is a big one.”

The size of the team to compete at The Hague is yet to be finalised but Gareth and Pirate want to hear from

anyone who has had a life-changing event, through injury or illness (mental or physical), while serving in uniform with the NZDF. This can be either domestically or operationally.

If you meet the criteria you will be asked to complete an administration/medical pack and attend a selection camp at Burnham Military Camp in June.

At the camp potential team members will be assessed on their ability in each sport, and interviewed by coaches, management and medical staff. Management then use a traffic light system—green for definite, orange for maybe, red for no—for the Board to consider and make final decisions on.

Board members are appointed by the Chief of Defence Force and include senior representatives from Defence Health, HR, Veterans’ Affairs, senior Defence Force warrant officers and the team’s Head of Mission.

A key consideration for team management in making their decisions on who to recommend sums up what the Games are about: “We look for those we believe need it the most.”

“Seeing what people have achieved over the Sydney campaign, and what they’ve come out of it like, is just really gratifying. I didn’t realise until I got home, and I sat down and remembered what people were like six



months earlier, compared with after the Games,” Gareth said.

Pirate said he had coached, managed and played for a lot of high-level sports teams but had never experienced the total commitment and camaraderie he had with Invictus.

“I think it’s about giving people the opportunity to be part of a team again, regardless of their illness or disability, and to be competitive again,” he said.

“In this team no one has a disability. It’s just another sports team full of special people.”

So, if you think you’ve got what it takes, maybe it’s time to register at [adaptivesport@nzdf.mil.nz](mailto:adaptivesport@nzdf.mil.nz)

**INVICTUS  
GAMES**

**Invictus 2020 applications open**

The next Games will be held in The Hague, the Netherlands, from 9 to 16 May 2020.

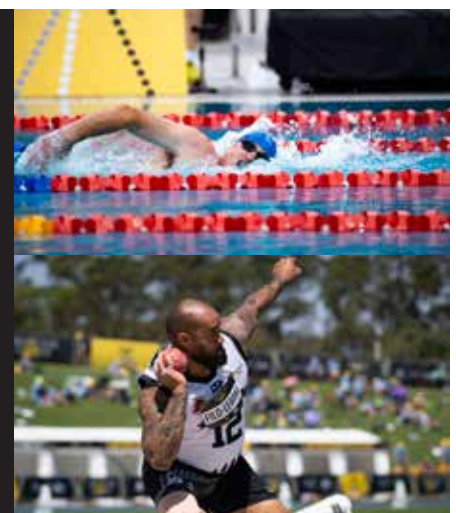
Applications are being sought from people who think they have what it takes to represent New Zealand in this unforgettable sporting event.

For more information:

[www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/invictus](http://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/invictus)

[adaptivesport@nzdf.mil.nz](mailto:adaptivesport@nzdf.mil.nz)

**Applications close 1 May 2019.**







# The Return to Timor

**Lieutenant Colonel Martin Dransfield, whose military links with Timor Leste go back 18 years, has returned to the country to take up the role of strategic advisor to the Chief of Staff F-FDTL, working in the Timorese Defence Force HQ.**

“After a tour in 2000 as the Commanding Officer of NZBATT2, and a second tour in 2011–2012 as the Chief Military Observer UNMIT, it’s exciting to be back in a country that is very dear to my heart,” he says.

As CO NZBATT2 his battalion took over from 1RNZIR who, he says, had done a superb job in establishing security along the border with West Timor in the Cova Lima district.

“The first impressions were of burnt out houses and a population traumatised by the violence that had

occurred in 1999, including the Suai Church massacre. We continued the work they had done in facilitating the movement back to East Timor of thousands of displaced people.

“Initially, the weather was the enemy, as torrential rain washed away bridges and roads, and the main focus was on humanitarian relief. However, with the onset of the dry season, the threat changed as groups of militia started to infiltrate across the border.

There were reports from locals, and sightings from our patrols, of suspicious movement which were confirmed on 24 July when a group of militia contacted one of our patrols, killing Private Len Manning. This incident changed the focus to not only providing security along the border but also the need to protect the local population throughout our area of responsibility. On 10 August, a patrol from the Nepalese Company, which was part of our battalion, contacted a second group of militia east of Suai resulting in the death of Private Devi Ram Jaisi.”

LTCOL Dransfield says the loss of Len Manning, a well-liked and respected soldier in B Company, had an enormous impact on his mates and the whole battalion. “I can only speak for myself, but the loss of a comrade causes you to reflect. We were in Timor Leste to secure peace for a nation which months previously had been burned to the ground and whose people were traumatised. Those same people had put their trust in us to protect them. Len had made the ultimate sacrifice to fulfil that promise, and as a battalion we were determined to ensure his sacrifice resulted in the future he had spoken of in his letters home to his parents Charlie and Linda.

“When I talk today with the soldiers who served with me in Timor in 2000 they all speak in similar terms of the impact Len’s death had on them. As the Commanding Officer, I felt the loss of Devi Ram Jaisi in the same way.”

With Private Manning’s death the battalion now had to use all of their professional training and close country skills to detect the militia while protecting the population. “Their





**“After a tour in 2000... and a second tour in 2011-2012... it’s exciting to be back in a country that is very dear to my heart.”**

approach not only involved patience, but also working closely with the local population, who simply wanted peace to rebuild their homes and their lives.

“It speaks volumes of the tenacity and ability of our soldiers to adapt to a changing environment that, after three months of intense operations, involving a series of clashes with armed militia and several sightings of militia crossing back into West Timor, by November there were no more encounters.

“I was fortunate to be able to visit NZBATT5 about a year later and witnessed the same determination, but also the compassion our people had for the Timorese people. The subsequent battalions, with incredible support from 3 SQN RNZAF, did a fantastic job in maintaining this environment and paved the way for the declaration of Timor Leste’s independence on 20 May 2002.”

LTCOL Dransfield returned to Timor for two years as part of the United Nations Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT) in 2010, close on the heels of

Commanding the New Zealand PRT in Afghanistan.

“I jumped at the opportunity. Afghanistan had been an incredible experience which set me up well to lead the UN observers in Timor Leste. In Afghanistan, I had discovered that traditional societies respect experience and invested in communication. Equally, the hardest of men were fathers who desired nothing more than an education and good health for their children.

“I took this experience into my appointment as the Chief of the Military Observers, UNMIT. My job involved travelling throughout Timor and visiting local leaders called Chef de Sucos, District Administrators, Police and the Military in order to monitor their issues and requests on behalf of the UN. My key focus areas were to assist in building the capacity of the security forces, particularly in the area of peacekeeping where we trained the first UN observers from the F-FDTL to deploy alongside NZ observers in UNMISS (UN Mission in South Sudan), and to support the

Ministry of Health to conduct health clinics throughout Timor Leste. We had vehicles, communications and local community networks, and in turn the Timorese Ministry of Health provided medical staff.”

*This article originally appeared in Army News issue 499, February 2019.*

## Did you serve in Timor Leste?

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the main deployment of NZDF personnel into Timor Leste. Five New Zealand Army personnel died throughout the mission in the then-strife torn country.

Army News is planning a feature looking back at the mission later this year. If you have any stories to tell, or special photographs to share of your time in Timor Leste, please contact [armynews@nzdf.mil.nz](mailto:armynews@nzdf.mil.nz)

# Grandparented rates from 1 April 2019

## War Disablement Pension

Ordinary rates		Rates for those with severe disablement		Rates for those with severe disablement: Aged 60 years and over	
Disablement (%)	Weekly rate (\$)	Disablement (%)	Weekly rate (\$)	Disablement (%)	Weekly rate (\$)
5	11.36	105	238.60	105	262.46
10	22.72	110	249.96	110	274.96
15	34.09	115	261.32	115	287.45
20	45.45	120	272.68	120	299.95
25	56.81	125	284.05	125	312.46
30	68.17	130	295.41	130	324.95
35	79.53	135	306.77	135	337.45
40	90.90	140	318.13	140	349.94
45	102.26	145	329.49	145	362.44
50	113.62	150	340.86	150	374.95
55	124.98	155	352.22	155	387.44
60	136.34	160	363.58	160	399.94
65	147.71				
70	159.07				
75	170.43				
80	181.79				
85	193.15				
90	204.52				
95	215.88				
100	227.24				

## Other Grandparented War Pensions and Allowances

	Weekly rate (\$)
<b>Clothing Allowance</b>	
Loss of two limbs or parts	24.13
Loss of leg or part	23.29
Loss of arm or part	16.87
Use of mechanical appliance (maximum)	16.87
Soiling of clothing	16.87
<b>Travelling Allowance</b>	26.20
<b>Allowance for Decorations*</b>	32.07

\*Note: The Allowance for Decorations is available for recipients of United Kingdom Gallantry Awards only.

## Veteran's Pension and Lump Sums



MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT  
TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

### Veteran's Pension

	Gross weekly rate (\$)
Single living alone rate	475.42
Single sharing accommodation rate	437.14
Relationship rate	360.42
Relationship (partner not receiving superannuation or pension)	682.86
Relationship (partner not receiving superannuation or pension) legacy rate	720.84

### Lump Sums

	Lump sum (\$)
<b>Lump Sum Payment on death of veteran</b>	6,065.89
If veteran was, before 1 April 1990, receiving a war veteran's allowance under the War Pension's Act 1954	15,294.64
<b>Lump Sum Payment on death of spouse or partner of veteran</b>	4,625.41

The weekly rates for the Veteran's Pension are shown as gross amounts. The exact payment you receive will depend on your own tax circumstances.

### Questions about Veteran's Pension and Lump Sums

For information about the Veteran's Pension and Lump Sum Payments contact the Veterans' Pension Centre.

☎ Freephone 0800 650 656

🖱 [www.workandincome.govt.nz/about-work-and-income/contact-us/veterans-contacts.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/about-work-and-income/contact-us/veterans-contacts.html)



## Scheme One entitlement rates from 1 April 2019

### Disablement Pension

Impairment rating (%)	Weekly rate (\$)
5-7	11.37
8-12	22.73
13-17	34.09
18-22	45.45
23-25	56.81
26-30	68.17
31-32	79.53
33-37	90.89
38-41	102.26
42-47	113.62
48-49	124.98
50	136.34
51	147.70
52-54	159.06
55-57	170.42
58-61	181.79
62-66	193.15
67	204.52
68-74	215.87
75	227.24
76	238.60
77	249.96
78	261.31
79	272.68
80	284.04
81	306.76
82	329.49
83	352.20
84	374.94
85-100	399.93

### Other weekly payments

	Weekly rate (\$)
Surviving Spouse or Partner Pension	167.63
Dependant's Pension	167.63
Children's Pension	179.49
Weekly Income Compensation	960.66

### Annual payments

	Annual rate (\$)
<b>Children's Bursary (Orphans and Children of Veteran's Pension)</b>	
Full Time Year 9-13	948.67
Full-time Tertiary	1,125.70
Part-time Tertiary	474.28
<b>Children's Bursary (Other Children)</b>	
Full Time Year 9-13	474.30
Full-time Tertiary	562.82
Part-time Tertiary	237.13

## Rates for entitlements common to Scheme One and Scheme Two from 1 April 2019

### Weekly rates

	Weekly rate (\$)
<b>Battery Allowance</b>	
Monaural	1.10
Binaural	2.23

### Lump sum payments

	Lump sum (\$)
Retirement Lump Sum	34,907.02
Asset Threshold for Couple (excl. house or vehicle)	317,336.57
Asset Threshold for Single or Couple (incl. house or vehicle)	528,894.29
<b>Motor Vehicle Grant</b>	
Total Lower Body Impairment	19,461.13
Severe Lower Body Impairment	8,758.08
Motor Vehicle Fitting Controls Grant	3,142.15
<b>Funeral Expenses</b>	
Funeral Expenses	2,558.71
Transportation of body within same locality	680.80
Transportation of body to a different locality	1,361.60



# The final resting place of our veterans

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**For most of our veterans one of New Zealand's cemeteries will be their final resting place.**

## **War graves**

Members of the armed forces who died during the First and Second World Wars are buried in war graves, which are looked after by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

The Ministry for Culture and Heritage acts on behalf of the Commission in New Zealand, and looks after graves that commemorate 2,908 personnel in 433 sites throughout the country.

## **Services cemeteries**

There are also 183 services cemeteries in New Zealand, where people with specified operational service, and their spouse or partner, can be buried. There is no requirement that those buried in services cemeteries need to have died in a conflict, or as a result of a conflict.

Each services cemetery is the responsibility of a local authority, with

most of them being part of public cemeteries managed by district and city councils. Some are managed by local Returned and Services' Associations or cemetery boards, with one in Waiouru managed by the New Zealand Defence Force.

Veterans' Affairs works to support local authorities to maintain and develop these services cemeteries. In the next edition of *VA News* we will have an in depth look at New Zealand's services cemeteries—

and the work that goes into their development and upkeep by a range of organisations.

## **Other burials**

Former military personnel may also be buried in public or private cemeteries, or urupa. Their graves, in these places, may not identify them as military. Navy veterans also have the option of having their ashes scattered at sea. We have a story about this on page 14.







## Mentioned in Despatches

In February the Governor-General, Her Excellency the Rt Hon Dame Patsy Reddy, made formal presentations to veterans of the Vietnam War who were Mentioned in Despatches (MID). The presentations occurred at Government House in both Wellington and Auckland.

Mentioned in Despatches awards were given in recognition of gallantry and high levels of service. At the time,

the citations were generally written by the commander of the unit involved and sometimes were read out on a Unit Parade.

The thirty awards were presented to veterans, or to the family representatives of those who have passed away. As the veterans already wear an oak leaf emblem on their Vietnam Medal, which designates they received an MID, they were presented

with a formal letter and copy of their citation at the ceremony.

**Above:** Veterans and family representatives with Their Excellencies Dame Patsy and her husband Sir David Gascoigne, at the ceremony at Government House in Wellington.  
**Below:** Veterans and family representatives with Their Excellencies Dame Patsy and her husband Sir David Gascoigne, at the morning (left) and afternoon (right) ceremonies at Government House in Auckland.  
Photo credit: Government House



# True mates share waves once again

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Kevin Mills and Patrick Monaghan, of the Mt Wellington Panmure RSA, served separately during World War II but became lifelong friends afterwards. Both expressed the wish to have their ashes scattered at sea.







Kevin Mills and Patrick Monaghan

By Andrew Bonallack

Two wartime sailors who bonded over laughter and stories at the “Navy” table at their RSA shared their final journey on the sea in December, thanks to the formal ashes scattering ceremonies offered by the Royal New Zealand Navy.

Kevin Mills and Patrick Monaghan, of the Mt Wellington Panmure RSA, served separately during World War II but became lifelong friends afterwards, frequently sharing Anzac Day services. Both expressed their wish to have their ashes scattered at sea, a ceremony the Navy provides to Navy and ex-Navy personnel at regular dates throughout the year.

It meant a good-humoured reunion of sorts for the respective families near the Stanley Bay wharf where the Mahanga, the Navy’s 14-metre transport launch, waited for what would be her fourth and fifth ashes scattering of the day. Across the families, the mood was one of satisfaction at a journey near completed. Mills’ wife Glennis said it was wonderful the “boys” were going together. “Because Patrick was coming out today, we asked if Kevin could come out on the same boat, because of their friendship at the RSA. They were good mates.”

Navy Chaplain Colin Mason, presiding over the day’s ceremonies, tells the families it’s going to be a great day.

He checks the caskets and notes the casket for Mills is completely sealed. A marine technician from the nearby workshops is quickly summoned, and he and a family member discreetly disappear, re-emerging with the casket lid sawn through and sealed with tape.

Mahanga is crewed by three sailors, dressed formally and helmed by a warrant officer in the upper wheelhouse. There’s a light chop when the boat arrives at Torpedo Bay wharf, opposite the Navy Museum, and the swell from the variety of pleasure craft and harbour ferries adds to the bounce.

It’s a good spot, says Glennis. Her husband used to run the Liberty Boat back and forth across Auckland Harbour, and they were in view of the Auckland wharves, where Kevin worked on the cranes after leaving the Navy. Mills had served during World War II on HMNZS GAMBIA, and had been painting the side of the ship when it had a near-miss from a Japanese kamikaze, shot down at virtually the last moment by an American fighter plane. “He used to say, we’ll never stop to paint the ship again.”

Mills and Monaghan had their own “Navy” table at the RSA with other sailors. “There used to be about eight of them, laughing their heads off to all the stories. Every Anzac Day, they would always stand up, and toast the Queen. Kevin would do every Poppy Day for the RSA. He always used to go to the big shopping mall. I found out he liked going because the ladies liked to give him hugs.”

Mahanga holds position in Torpedo Bay, with the helmsman sensibly angling the boat to allow for the wind direction. The Mills family go first, with Chaplain Mason giving a prayer and a reading, and inviting the family members to speak. The scattering of the ashes, dense and fine, is shared by family, with flowers cast in the waves at the end.

“I think I’ve got my sea legs now,” said Glennis, on the return to Devonport.

Her husband, a former president and patron of his RSA, would have been humbled by the ceremony. “We couldn’t have got a better day. It was lovely, very emotional.”

Terry Monaghan, Patrick Monaghan’s son, says the service was nicely done. “For years he said, I want my ashes scattered at sea. He didn’t want people to come along to a cemetery to look after a headstone, then after five years people forgot you were there. It was a wonderful service, and Colin did a great job. I don’t know how many times he’s done it, but it was as if it was the first time. He keeps it all fresh.” His father served on Fairmiles around the Solomon Islands during the war. “The boys would have been delighted with the weather. I think Patrick would have wanted a bit more wave action – he liked a bit of spray.”

Chaplain Mason says due to demand for the service, the Navy will increase the ash scattering dates from three to four times a year. He already has five requests for services for 2019.

“The service is for Navy and ex-Navy, New Zealand and foreign, or the partner or child of an ex-Navy or serving Navy person.”

In a final honour, it turned out Mr Mills was owed two more medals for his service to New Zealand. Two days later, at the RSA, Acting Deputy Chief of Navy Captain Maxine Lawes made a posthumous presentation to Glennis of Mr Mills’ New Zealand Operational Service Medal and the New Zealand Service Medal 1946–1949.

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# Waitangi Day marked, Taji-style

New Zealand soldiers performed the New Zealand Defence Force haka as part of the Waitangi Day celebrations at Camp Taji, Iraq, earlier this month.

A soldier performed the wero, or ceremonial challenge, during the powhiri to welcome guests to the event. A celebratory cake was baked to mark the occasion, and guests enjoyed a traditional New Zealand meal after games of volleyball and gumboot tossing.



CPL Waina Brown performs the wero.



Contingent Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel Darren Beck cuts the cake.



Guests tuck into Kiwi fare.