

Veterans' Staff Network established at Ara Poutama Aotearoa

Ex-military and reservist staff working for Ara Poutama Aotearoa share a bond that will remain for life, which is the intention behind their new Veterans' Staff Network.

Case Management and Probation Practice Principal Adviser Ange Coyle and Senior Adviser Māori Partnerships Mark Pirikahu, both based at National Office, have been working towards establishing a network for ex-military and reservist staff.



Ara Poutama Senior Adviser – Māori Partnerships Mark Pirikahu, Head of Veterans' Affairs Bernadine Mackenzie, Ara Poutama Deputy Chief Executive – People and Capability Richard Waggott, Ara Poutama Principal Adviser – Case Management and Probation Practice Ange Coyle, RNZRSA Senior Strategic Adviser Danny Nelson, Ara Poutama Chief Legal Adviser Leishia Pettigrew, and Ara Poutama General Manager – Case Management and Probation Practice Darius Fagan

Ange and Mark say they are amazed by how many staff are former service personnel.

“Many other ex-military personnel like ourselves are working for Ara Poutama Aotearoa. We all have our own unique experiences and have served at different times, but we share a bond that will remain for life. This bond is something that can be drawn upon, especially when someone may be struggling or has reached a hurdle in their life,” says Ange.

Ange served in the New Zealand Army for eight years in the Royal New Zealand Corps of Signals and was deployed to Afghanistan three times. She says her service led to a number of unique experiences and exposure to trauma, both in New Zealand and while deployed overseas.

“The effects of these experiences are difficult for those who haven't been in military service to understand. The experiences have changed my life in different ways, some for the better and some that will have lifelong impacts.”

Mark served in the Royal New Zealand Navy for 29 years in a variety of leadership roles, including anti-submarine warfare, career management of staff, management of the Naval Emergency Services, overseas deployment tasks, Māori Cultural

career management of staff, management of the Naval Emergency Services, overseas deployment tasks, Maori Cultural Education Officer, and Adviser to the Chief of Navy and Chief of Defence Force.

“There are already small informal ex-military networks in operation within our prisons and community probation, so it got us thinking that there should be a formalised network to link staff who are ex-military,” says Mark.

“Research indicates that ex-military personnel benefit from working together in a team, so the network will provide staff with an opportunity to connect or reconnect with fellow comrades.”

The aim of the network is to:

- Promote the Ara Poutama Aotearoa values and provide support for ex-military staff, especially those transitioning out of the New Zealand Defence Force.
- Participate in commemorative events across the country, providing an opportunity for all staff to acknowledge, remember and care for all those impacted by service in military operations both past and present.
- Promote Ara Poutama Aotearoa as an employer and supporter of ex-military personnel.
- Promote the external support available to ex-military staff through organisations such as Veterans’ Affairs and the RNZRSA.

“This staff network aligns with our core values and will provide an avenue for our ex-military and reservist staff to come together, remember and support one another,” says executive leadership team sponsor of the network, Richard Waggott. “Working together with Veterans’ Affairs and the RNZRSA ensures our staff have access to the support they are entitled to.”

“Veterans’ Affairs is proud to be part of the Veterans' Network at Ara Poutama Aotearoa. We do a lot of work together and it’s great to be a part of this initiative. There are many veterans currently working for Ara Poutama Aotearoa, so getting them connected with each other and being able to tell them about the support that is available to them from Veterans’ Affairs, is fantastic,” says Head of Veterans’ Affairs Bernadine Mackenzie.

Mark and Ange both agree it’s great having such a strong working relationship with Veterans’ Affairs and RNZRSA who are right behind the network and supporting Ara Poutama staff.

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